How American Indians Were Displaced by White Settlers in the Cuyahoga Valley

JOHN TULLY

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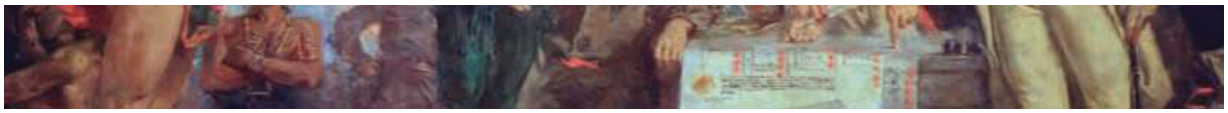

# Crooked Deals and Broken Treaties

# CROOKED DEALS AND BROKEN TREATIES

## How American Indians Were Displaced by White Settlers in the Cuyahoga Valley

*by* JOHN TULLY

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There has never been a document of culture
which is not simultaneously one of barbarism.[1]
—*Walter Benjamin*

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*For the dispossessed American Indians*
*of the Cuyahoga Valley region*

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# A Note on Terminology

What collective name should we use to describe the first owners of the land that is now the United States? It might not seem to matter, but the question has sparked fierce debate. Should it be "Native Americans," or "American Indians," or even just "Indians"? A respectful approach dictates that it should be up to those concerned; but there is no unanimity among what is, after all, a great multiplicity of peoples. A 1995 U.S. Department of Labor survey found that fifty percent of those identifying as indigenous preferred the term "American Indian," while thirty-seven percent favored "Native American." Thirteen per cent did not express a preference, perhaps identifying as "First Nations peoples," "indigenous peoples," or "aboriginal peoples." Some, perhaps, didn't think it mattered. The National Congress of American Indians uses the term "Indians" frequently, but others argue that "Indian" is a label coined by the white colonizers and based on Columbus's mistaken belief that he had landed in Asia and not the Caribbean.

Where appropriate, I have used the names of particular American Indian nations, but this, too, can present problems. The name "Delaware," for instance, is still in common use today, but it is derived from the family name of the de la Warrs, who were aristocratic English landholders in colonial America. The people called themselves the Lenni Lenape, which simply means *The People*. Some Lenape still use the name Delaware and that is their choice. In the end, it is not for me as a European and a foreigner to rule on these terminological issues, which are also political matters. Accordingly, I will use both American Indian and Native American, and occasionally Indian or indigenous people. I do so with respect at all times.

# Preface

VISITORS TO AKRON MAY BE CURIOUS about the life-sized, metal-clad, concrete statue of an "Indian Brave" in Highland Park Square, on the corner of West Market Street and Portage Path. Known locally as "Unk," it was unveiled on July 4, 1905, to memorialize the route along which American Indians carried their canoes between the St. Lawrence and Mississippi basins. (From hereon, we will primarily alternate between "American Indians" and "Native Americans" and only sparingly "Indians.") Until 1789, the Portage Path or Indian Trail marked the westernmost boundary of the United States. Three further monuments, fashioned by the Onondaga-Seneca artist Peter Jones, were erected on the Portage Path in 2003. G. F. Kasch's Unk and Jones's flint arrowhead sculptures are the city's only monuments to the indigenous peoples of the Cuyahoga Valley. Less respectfully, there is a chicken restaurant named after the warrior Hopocan in Barberton on Akron's fringe.

This book examines the early years of the European settlement of Akron in the Cuyahoga Valley region and the adverse impacts on its Native American inhabitants, with some discussion of what colonization meant for the local ecology. While the book acknowledges the struggles of the Europeans to settle on the American frontier, it is also a dark story of dispossession, genocide, and ecological devastation. As Joseph Conrad wrote in *Heart of Darkness*, "The conquest of the earth, which mostly means the taking it away from those who have a different complexion or slightly flatter noses than ourselves, is not a pretty thing when you look into it too much."[2] And this, I learned, was the case in Akron.

Founded in 1825 and situated in the northeast region of Ohio near the Cuyahoga River, Akron has been called the "All-American City." It is the seat of Summit County, which was formed on March 3, 1840, from portions of Medina, Portage, and Stark Counties. It was named "Summit County" because it contains the highest elevation of the Ohio and Erie Canal. It lies some 35 miles south of the city of Cleveland and Lake Erie. The Cuyahoga —the "Crooked River"—rises in a forested upland region between the two cities. Akron is one of the cradles of the Industrial Revolution that transformed America. Once known as the "Rubber Capital of the World," Akron has been recognized as a world leader in polymer research and engineering. It is a city of great invention and boasts many illustrious sons and daughters in the sciences, arts, industry, and public life. And yet it has a dark history that few people seem comfortable talking about. One cannot contemplate "Unk" without thinking about the violent origins of present-day civilization in the Cuyahoga Valley region. Many justify what happened as the price of "progress." However, the descendants of those expelled from the Cuyahoga Valley some two hundred years ago still suffer the consequences of this "progress." While we cannot undo the past, we can take steps to remedy historical wrongs.

Nor should we forget the environmental devastation caused by settlement of the region at a time when people regarded nature as an adversary to be subdued. As Frederick Engels wrote prophetically back in 1876:

> Let us not, however, flatter ourselves on account of our human victories over nature. For each such victory nature takes its revenge on us. Each victory, it is true, in the first place brings about the results we expected, but in the second and third places it has quite different, unforeseen effects which only too often cancel out the first . . . at every step we are reminded that we by no means rule over nature like a conqueror over a foreign people, like someone standing outside of nature—but that we, with flesh, blood and brain, belong to nature . . . and that all our mastery of it consists in the fact that we have the advantage over all other creatures of being able to learn its laws and apply them correctly.[3]

The dispossessed people of the Cuyahoga Valley might agree. A well-known Native American adage warns: “When the last tree is cut down, the last fish eaten, and the last stream poisoned, you will realize that you cannot eat money.” Another American Indian proverb asks, “What is this you call property? It cannot be the earth, for the land is our mother, nourishing all her children, beasts, birds, fish and all men. The woods, the streams: everything on it belongs to everybody and is for the use of all. How can one man say it belongs only to him?” The old American Indian way of life was destroyed, but it points to the possibility of a better world in which human beings are not alienated from themselves and from nature.

# 1

# The Settlement of Summit County: The Early Years

> There is a remarkably fine Situation for a town at the old Cajahaga [*sic*] Town, & there can be no doubt of a large Trading Town being established there . . . the carrying place between the two Rivers Cajahaga and Muskingum must be this place.
>
> —JOHN HECKEWELDER[4]

The forest pressed in on all sides. A musket was slung across his back. Powder and shot were in pouches strapped to his waist. A ramrod slapped at his thigh. By his side plodded a mule, carrying the rest of his possessions. The Pennsylvanian Daniel Haines had made the long trek up the Cuyahoga from Lake Erie, to what was then the furthest frontier of the American Republic in the year 1806. He stopped at the point where the path leveled out and set about clearing the forest. His nearest European neighbors were some fifteen miles to the north in Hudson Township.

The chroniclers have recorded little about Haines and he soon faded back into the obscurity from whence he came. In some accounts he is called David, not Daniel. He appears to have been the first European to settle permanently at the site of what was to become the city of Akron, which lies on the natural watershed divide from which point water flows north towards the Great Lakes or south toward the Ohio River and the Mississippi beyond. So shadowy a figure is Haines that some popular accounts claim he settled

in what became Coventry Township in the Portage Lakes district south of Akron.[5]

Though he may not have been aware of it, Haines's progress up the Portage Path would not have gone unobserved. The local Native American people would have watched his ascent uneasily. They—or their forebears—had seen it all before. They had been displaced time and again by the inexorable westward movement of white settlers hungry for their land.

Haines carved a modest farm from the wilderness. He built a crude log cabin from the timber he felled, planted corn, and in time established an orchard. As a matter of course, he fenced off what he had cleared. With his arrival, the scene was set for a great transformation of the landscape and was primed for tragedy. At first, only a trickle of settlers followed Haines into the district. One year after his arrival, in 1807, a sea captain named Joseph Hart arrived at Atwater in what was then known as New Connecticut from Wallingford in "old" Connecticut. Hart next settled in the nearby township of Middlebury, or as it is now known, the sixth ward of Akron. According to the Portage County Land Record, a deed for 54/100 acres was given to Hart by the Brace Company on August 20, 1811. According to Charles Bronson, Hart and a partner called Norton constructed a crude dam and grist mill on the Little Cuyahoga River in 1808, and he may also have resided for a time in Tallmadge Township, on the outskirts of today's Akron.[6]

The American victory in the War of 1812 against the British gave land-hungry settlers the confidence to push westwards into what were seen as virgin lands over the Appalachian mountain chain. At the same time, this signaled the doom of the Native American peoples, some of whom had backed the British on the assumption that "my enemy's enemy is my friend." The Western Reserve of Ohio was to become "a land without people for a people without land." Soon it was filled with the sounds of the settlers' axes, the crackling of flames, and the smoke of large fires. The siren call of the West was hard to resist for native-born and immigrant alike. The Irish traveler Thomas Mooney advised his countrymen to:

> Remember that if you please, you can, as soon as you get into a regular employment, save the price of an acre and a half of the finest land in the world every week! And in less than a year you will have

> enough money to start to the west, and take up an eighty acre farm, which will be your own forever.[7]

Mooney was an early "booster," but there was enough truth in his claims for immigrants to overlook the hyperbole.

## *A New Connecticut on the Western Frontier*

Many of the early settlers along the Cuyahoga had come in response to offers from agents of the Connecticut Land Company. The company had been formed in the late eighteenth century to survey the region and to encourage settlement there. Part of the old Northwest Territory, the Connecticut Western Reserve was located in northeast Ohio with its hub in Cleveland. In 1795, the state of Connecticut had sold the Reserve to the land company, an early venture capitalist project. Moses Cleaveland, a lawyer and surveyor from Canterbury in New England, was the firm's largest shareholder. On July 22, 1796, he landed near the mouth of the Cuyahoga River on Lake Erie. The district was to become known as Cleveland in a variation of his name.

By the turn of the nineteenth century, a steady trickle of New Englanders was following him into the Reserve, many of them wealthy Puritans who could trace their biological and religious lineage back to the *Mayflower*. Not all of the early arrivals purchased their land, however. Some were squatters—men such as William Walker who in 1802 settled on a parcel of land at Silver Lake near today's Akron without paying for it.[8] For a small sum, squatters could buy their plots, but if they cleared the forest, planted crops, and/or grazed animals on it the government would often grant them title for free.[9] As we shall see, the frontier also attracted its share of escaped jailbirds, runaway husbands, confidence tricksters, counterfeiters and others who preferred to live by their wits and the proceeds of crime rather than by honest toil. Timothy Dwight—whose tenure as President of Yale coincided with the early days of settlement in New Connecticut—sneered at the character of the "pioneers":

> These men cannot live in regular society. They are too idle, too talkative, too passionate, too prodigal, and too shiftless to acquire either property or character. They are impatient of the restraints of law, religion, and morality; grumble about the taxes by which Rulers, Ministers, and Schoolmasters are supported . . . [10]

At least one early settler did not fit such a description. In 1798, an affluent thirty-eight-year-old Connecticut man named David Hudson purchased land for 32 cents an acre from the Land Company. In the spring of 1799, Hudson set out from Goshen in Connecticut for the frontier, engaging a young man called Joseph Darrow to act as foreman over his party of hired men. Hudson was one of six original landowners in the New England–style town named after him in the north of Summit County. Hudson was an early arrival in the Western Reserve, but he was atypical of the colonists. While many settlers arrived on foot with pitifully few possessions, Hudson was rich enough to travel with a small force of hired men, carts, oxen, farm animals, seed stock, tools, and other equipment.[11] Yet his wealth did not entirely spare him from the rigors of the frontier. At times, by his own admission, he almost "repented" of the whole enterprise.[12]

On June 9, 1799, Hudson's flotilla of small boats anchored in the mouth of the Cuyahoga River. The following day, he left Darrow in charge and went on ahead. What the local Seneca people—perhaps watching from the forests—made of the expedition has not been recorded, but they must have been uneasy. For his part, Hudson did not hold the Native Americans in high esteem and nor did he have any qualms about taking land from them. One week after commencing his journey—which would take at most thirty minutes by road or a few hours by bicycle along the river trail today—Hudson walked uphill from the river, looking for a surveyor's marker that delineated the boundary of what would become Hudson Township. Eventually he found some "excellent land," which he set his men to clear. Provisions soon ran low, however, and Hudson set off alone to fetch more supplies from the lake. By now the weather had grown cold and Hudson experienced what he recalled as "the most uncomfortable night I have ever spent," camping on the riverbank without light or fire.[13]

The clearing of the site of Hudson Township was finished by the midsummer of 1799. Hudson and his men took shelter in the single log house that they had built. Rain fell relentlessly, turning the soil into a quagmire. In the fall, all of Hudson's party fell sick and he had to nurse them back to health. Aware of the approaching winter, Hudson could not afford to neglect the work and had to stack and burn the wet brushwood and prepare hay for the cold season on his own.

Clearing was relentlessly backbreaking work. The English traveler David Griffiths, Jr., recorded the process in his book *Two Years' Residence in the New Settlements*. First, he noted, the "underwood" would be rooted out with a mattock. Next, every sapling less than four inches in diameter had to be pulled out by hand and dragged along with the underbrush to heaps and burned. Then the taller timbers would be felled and split into fencing if it were straight, or piled up for burning if it were crooked.[14] In this way, Hudson's men cleared and fenced nine acres of land—approximately the size of nine football fields.

In the fall, Hudson went back to Connecticut to bring his family, leaving a small party behind to watch over the land during the winter months.[15] One can imagine the anxiety of those left behind in the great dark emptiness of the frontier, wondering if their master would ever return with sorely needed supplies. It was a scenario that had been played and replayed countless times since colonists first set foot on the faraway coast of America. No doubt as they huddled round their fires, Hudson's men would have fretted over the intentions of the local American Indians. However, had these been the savages of popular imagination—and of Hudson's estimation—they could have overpowered the men left behind. They chose not to, although they must have known of their presence and watched them at work.

In the spring of 1800, Hudson returned with his twenty-seven-year-old wife Anna and their six children, together with a party of new colonists.[16] One of them, Dr. Moses Thompson, also a native of Goshen, Connecticut, had bought 750 acres from the Land Company.[17] He was the only physician in the vast wilderness of the Western Reserve, which should give pause for thought to those of us who today take the availability of medical services for granted.

The settlers of Hudson Township were God-fearing and industrious folk and they set to work with great Protestant will. After a decade, Hudson had

become what the mapmaker John Melish described as “an old and thriving settlement” boasting dairies from which butter and cheese were exported as far away as New Orleans.[18] By the time David Hudson died in 1836 at seventy-five years of age, the colonists had done much to transform the frontier. Hudson himself had raised sheep, tilled the land for wheat and root crops, and invested in mercantile and manufacturing enterprises, including a gristmill and a distillery. He served as local postmaster and Justice of the Peace, and had endowed a local library.[19]

David Hudson epitomized the transplanted New England Puritan. His reason for relocating to New Connecticut was only partly entrepreneurial. He had earlier undergone an intense religious experience and had become a deacon of the Presbyterian Church. Mammon-like, he had one eye on the riches of the earth, but kept the other fixed firmly on the next world and his township was planned as a God-fearing utopian settlement far from the fleshpots of the East Coast. Hudson was not the only settlement founded by clergymen in what became Summit County. David Bacon, a prominent Congregationalist missionary from Woodstock, Connecticut, established the township of Tallmadge in 1807. Alas for Bacon, his plans for a New Jerusalem on the frontier came to naught following an influx of less devout folk into the town. These soon outnumbered the original Puritans. Nor were Bacon’s attempts to proselytize among the local American Indians successful and he eventually left the town in disgust. Today, Tallmadge lies within the boundaries of Greater Akron, with little to remind us of the ideals of its founder.[20]

Those ideals had a downside. David Hudson’s son, David Jr., left us a bleak diary of his teenage years in the Puritan utopia of his father’s creation. He recounts that in his father’s township, solid prosperity and a penchant for hard work and piety were mixed with dour fanaticism, narrow-mindedness and self-righteousness—and a dose of hypocrisy. On Saturday, January 1, 1825, the boy arose a little after six a.m. to face a cold, windy, and snowy morning. He brought in the cows for milking at seven o’clock, and afterwards cleaned out the stables. Much of the next day was spent at church and when he was not doing his farm chores on the following days, he was at prayer meetings in neighbors’ houses. The boy was relentlessly hard on himself: “I was somewhat idle in the evening,” he writes in one entry, only to inform us a few pages later that he was feeling “rather unwell last night.” He adds, “I feel rather a guilty conscience” and promises to

"strive with more energy" to lead a virtuous life. On Saturday, January 8, he "arose late, to my regret . . . [and] did my usual chores." The entry for the following Monday informs us that he had a swelling in the groin, which he treated with vinegar, and then kept working. A day or so later, he tells us that he has gone lame in one leg, with sores on the limb, but that he still tried to do his chores. He later laments, "I set out a new resolution this forenoon but soon gave it up," adding that he has an ominous fear that he has committed "the unpardonable sin" (probably blasphemy).[21]

His journal is one long lamentation. He castigates himself as idle, lazy, and unworthy, but drives himself on, despite his ill-health. It is hard for any child to live up to parental expectations. But David Jr. had grown up in a straitlaced society with little latitude for human frailty. Many of the adults at Hudson were akin to renowned New England Puritan notable Cotton Mather, dour fanatics who regarded any "softness" as the work of the devil. The intense religiosity of many of the settlers, particularly those from New England, doubtless helped them endure frontier life, and for many, to eventually prosper. Journalist Herman Fetzer considered the Western Reserve to be "the last stand of Puritanism in the United States." Under the influence of such an austere brand of religion, the rude frontier society was tamed and a new society emerged. By 1840, they had created a place that was "more New England than New England itself."[22]

## *Middlebury: The First Village on the Little Cuyahoga*

Further south, the incorporated village of Middlebury was the first permanent European settlement on the Little Cuyahoga River,[23] which flows into the parent stream just north of Akron. It is situated within the city limits of present-day Akron, into which it was later incorporated as East Akron. In 1805, according to local grandee Lucius V. Bierce, Middlebury had a population of three to four hundred people. Six years later, a traveler found it to be a settlement of forty families, most of them originally from old Connecticut.[24] By the War of 1812, the village was large enough to raise a detachment of riflemen to fight the British. Whereas many surrounding communities were based on farming, Middlebury became an industrial and commercial center. The town plat was not registered until

1820, but by that time many homes, stores, and industries were already well established.

There were several other industrial sites along the Cuyahoga by this time, including a shipyard at Old Portage, just north of Akron. The shipyard stimulated local industry, including a dam and sawmill owned by the Wetmore family and partners.[25] In 1810, a road was cut from Tallmadge that connected Middlebury with the settlements of Hudson, Stow, Franklin Mills, and Warren. This also proved a great stimulus to local industrial development.

By 1815, Middlebury boasted a nail factory, lumber and grain mills, hotels, and a number of stores. The Laird & Norton iron foundry, in what is today's Old Forge district of Akron, employed sixty men and boys to make iron kettles and other domestic goods in primitive conditions.[26] A few years later, the Middlebury entrepreneur Dr. Eliakim Crosby joined forces with Akron's co-founder, Simon Perkins, to dam the Little Cuyahoga to power a plow factory[27]—a precursor of the agricultural implement and machinery trade that later thrived in the city. Crosby was another transplanted New Englander, having been born in Litchfield, Connecticut, in 1779. After qualifying as a physician in Buffalo in upstate New York, he led a peripatetic life before settling in Akron. Arguably, Crosby did more to set Akron on the path to industrialization than any other individual.

## *The Trek from New England to the "Land of Promise"*

And yet we should not overestimate the industrial transformation of the region. Admitted to the Union in 1803, Ohio had remained a poor cousin of the eastern states. Rich in natural resources and blessed with plenty of good farming land, the Western Reserve produced wheat, corn, butter, and cheese, but was remote from the markets in the east and south. Imported manufactured goods such as clothing, nails, glass, tableware, tools, and machinery were in short supply and exorbitantly priced. The local roads were little more than tracks and impassable in the brutally cold winters or after heavy summer rains. There was no real cash economy in the Western Reserve for several decades. Summit County was still a remote place,

settlement was sparse, and industrial development catered for local demand. The Western Reserve was a place of "great loneliness."[28]

Nor did the early settlers find themselves in a land of milk and honey after their long trek over the mountains. Most visitors agreed that while the soil of the district was fertile, and had good potential for agriculture, the early settlers had to work hard to prepare it for sowing. The terrain around Akron was broken and hilly, with thick forests, sand hills, lakes, and swamps impeding movement and challenging those who wished to farm. The earth, too, was often rocky. Many of the early settlers, according to Zerah Hawley, who visited in the early 1820s, spent their days in "discontent, poverty, wretchedness and despair."[29]

Most of the settlers were poor people. The likes of the wealthy Crosby, Hudson, or Perkins were atypical. Many poor New Englanders had little choice but to emigrate. The summer of 1816 was the coldest ever experienced in New England, with severe frosts persisting throughout the season. The corn crop failed and potatoes, hay, oats, and other farm products were in short supply. This created extreme distress as it was difficult to import food, even if the farmers could afford to pay for it. Samuel Goodrich, writing under the pen name of Peter Parley, recalled that along the Connecticut River in June, the hills were as barren as November. It was small wonder that Ohio beckoned and "a sort of stampede took place from cold, worn-out New England to this land of promise."[30]

Goodrich has left us a graphic account of the ordeals the travelers faced in getting to the Western Reserve. It was an odyssey similar to the later trek of the "Okie" farmers across country to California in the 1930s. Goodrich recounts a typical journey thus:

> The father and boys taking turns in dragging along an improvised hand-made wagon, loaded with the wreck of household goods, occasionally giving the mother and baby a ride. Many of these persons were in a state of poverty; and begged their way as they went. Some died before they reached the expected Canaan; many perished after their arrival, from fatigue and privation; and others from the fever and ague.[31]

The roads over the Alleghenies, Goodrich recalled, were "rude, steep, and dangerous, and some of the more precipitous slopes were consequently strewn with the carcases [*sic*] of wagons, carts, horses, oxen, which had made shipwreck in their perilous descents." The richer folk traveled in covered wagons—"frequently a family consisting of a father, mother, and nine small children, with one on the breast"—but the poorer families walked all the way.

Emigrants would huddle together at night in "miserable sheds, called taverns—the mothers frying, children crying, fathers swearing . . . a mingled comedy and tragedy of errors." Goodrich adds that many succumbed to malaria or similar afflictions, from which they never recovered. He believed that many of these involuntary exiles, if they survived, permanently mourned "the land they had left, with its roads, schools, meeting houses—its hope, health and happiness!"[32] Charles Whittlesey tells us that during the summer of 1816, there was "great mortality among females and children" in the township of Tallmadge. Some of those who had left New England starved to death and others perished of "diseases of the west."[33]

The climate, too, proved less benign than the emigrants had hoped. The summers, with their frequent, almost tropical downpours and thunderstorms, were uncomfortably hot and humid, as David Hudson had discovered. There were occasional tornadoes.[34] The winters were bitterly cold, damp, and snowy. The summer heat incubated swarms of biting insects and poisonous reptilian life in the undergrowth and rocky places.

## *Dirt Poor Settlers*

This was, as Wheeler puts it, a land of "struggling and often dirt-poor settlers" living in isolated huts and small villages, fighting "protracted battles with armies of mosquitoes, fleas and bedbugs"[35]—and often losing. Griffiths Jr., who was usually favorably impressed with the Reserve, tells us that the mosquitoes "haunted me like ghosts."[36] Often hungry, some—perhaps many—of the new settlers were saved from starvation and disease by friendly Indians, as was the case with the Wetmore family at Silver Lake.[37]

Born in Middletown, Connecticut, Judge William Wetmore first arrived in the Western Reserve in 1804 as a land agent employed by Joshua Stow, the founder of Stow Township. Much later, in 1825, he would become one of the founders of the township of Cuyahoga Falls. Wetmore befriended the local Seneca people at Silver Lake, including its Chief, Wagmong. Wagmong frequently visited the family on business and many years later, Wetmore's son recalled playing with the Seneca children in their village near the lake. Wetmore grew turnips, cucumbers, cabbages, and wheat, which he traded for fresh meat from the Indians. Wetmore later admitted that if the Senecas had not helped his family out with procuring meat "they would have starved that first winter." In one incident, Wetmore fell sick with malaria, and only avoided death thanks to the ministrations of the Senecas' medicine man. The parallel with the Patuxet Indians' generosity to the Pilgrim Fathers over 180 years earlier at New Plymouth is striking.

## *Perils of the Frontier*

Disease was not the only peril of the frontier, as a number of contemporary writers make clear. One of these was the Connecticut attorney, Henry Leavitt Ellsworth, whose father, Oliver, was one of the signatories to the Declaration of Independence. The family was rich and influential. Oliver Ellsworth was among the eight original purchasers of the Western Reserve. His purchase of 41,000 acres included much of the site of present-day Cleveland. In 1811, aged nineteen, Henry traveled to the Western Reserve on horseback to investigate irregularities in land sales by the family agent.

Ellsworth traveled solo and his trip was sometimes arduous. He wrote an account of his experiences traveling in the Reserve entitled *Tour to New Connecticut* in 1811. In his book, he describes spending the night in a hut somewhere in the east of the Reserve as a torment replete with bedbug and flea bites. "In all my life," he complained, "I never [have] see[n]so much dirt and filth in any human habitation as in this mans [*sic*] hut." After a night spent fighting vermin so large that he imagined he had a "carnivorous creature" in his bed, he fled headlong.[38]

The Cuyahoga Valley's insect pests were vectors for illnesses. Mosquitoes, sandflies and other insects swarmed in summer. Christian Cackler, an early resident of Hudson Township, remembered that the

Seneca people would grease their skins to protect against the biting pests.[39] Other travelers and settlers documented the region's swarms of mosquitoes. Ellsworth observed that many of the inhabitants near the Portage Path suffered from malaria.[40] Judge Wetmore considered that "[f]ever and ague [malaria] were the greatest menace other than the scarcity of food."[41] Little understood at the time, malaria was to plague the area's settlers for many decades to come. Melish, noting the "pale, sickly visages" of the settlers, believed that "the seeds of disease" lay in the Cuyahoga's "slow, sluggish, winding course, choked up with a vast quantity of vegetable matter undergoing decomposition."[42] From other early travelers' accounts, we know that personal and domestic hygiene was very poor. Domestic squalor and contaminated water and food supplies were leading causes of diarrhea, cholera, and typhoid.

In addition to its swarms of insects, the countryside around Akron was also infested with rattlesnakes. One of the keenest observers of the Western Reserve's flora and fauna, the politician, physician, and naturalist Dr. Jared Potter Kirtland, noted three kinds: the large yellow, the large black, and the small black, or Massasaugua.[43] Despite its size, the latter was "the terror of all cranberry hunters"[44] and a Stow man died after being bitten twice on the heel while picking blackberries.[45] The snakes killed horses and livestock on occasion and even bit the settlers' dogs as they slept.

If one fell sick or was bitten by a snake, the chances of receiving skilled medical attention were slight. For some time, Hudson Township's Dr. Thompson was the only physician in a huge area stretching from Lake Erie to the remote forests south of the town. Often, settlers were forced to seek medical treatment from the local Native American tribespeople. There was little European medicine could do for human or animal victims of snakebites, but American Indian medicine men had a wealth of knowledge of medicinal plants. Ellsworth met a man whose young son had been saved by an "Indian doctor" who had treated the bite with blue false indigo, a local weed, after conventional methods had proved futile.[46] A toddler narrowly escaped when his parents found him sharing his bread and milk with a rattler.[47]

The citizens of newly-founded Cuyahoga Falls (1812), located just north of Akron, decided on outright extermination of the rattlers because they "were so numerous that it was seriously questioned whether the settlers

would be able to remain," the Rev. Thomas B. Fairchild tells us.[48] During a day's work, Joshua Stow, founder of Stow Township near Silver Lake in Akron's outskirts, killed between two and eight large rattlesnakes and "at night a part were dressed, cooked and eaten by [his surveying] party with a good relish."[49]

The slaughter that Stow began, subsequent settlers finished. Some settlers organized contests to see who could kill the most snakes. The snakes hibernated together in huge numbers in the rocky parts of the district, such as on Story Hill behind Tallmadge. In the spring, the snakes emerged from their long hibernation "in a torpid state" and were dispatched in the hundreds and thousands. Men would lie in wait for the snakes and "slew them by hundreds." After five or six years of "vigorous effort," they were annihilated.[50] So great and relentless was the slaughter that in 1835 David Griffith Jr. claimed that rattlesnakes were seldom seen in the Reserve.[51] In 1850, Dr. Kirtland wrote that "No one will probably regret that the venomous reptiles have been so nearly exterminated."[52] In 1933, William Lodge claimed never to have seen or heard of one in over half a century, even in "gorges and wild land" around Akron.[53] Today, many of northeast Ohio's snakes, the rattlers included, are classified as endangered species.

## *Smoothing Off the Rawness*

When Griffiths first visited the district in the early 1830s, some of its rawness had been smoothed off. Although he believed that it still presented "a very wild appearance to an Englishman," he also noted "the aspect of the country has undergone a marvellous change, within the living memory of the first settlers." Clearing and building was proceeding apace. While the roads left much to be desired, they at least existed and there were stores, blacksmiths' sheds, and taverns located "at convenient distances" along them. Griffiths observed of some friends he made that while their dwelling was rude and isolated, they were "both civilized and Christianized beings."[54]

The myth of "how the West was won" is deeply embedded in popular American culture. It depicts men in heroic and virtuous struggle for survival

in a vast and hostile wilderness. The struggle is seen as molding the national character: fiercely individualistic, industrious, thrifty, rugged, God-fearing, and democratic. Hyperbole or not, the transformation the settlers wrought upon the landscape was astounding and this was as true of New Connecticut as elsewhere. While many chroniclers of the time stressed the hardships of the frontier life, for many poor people, life was better than it had been in the places they left behind.

On the Western frontier, homes were built from scratch with whatever materials were at hand, and were usually log cabins fashioned from the trees the settlers cut down for their fields. Nails were expensive and difficult to acquire and most of the cabins were held together by simple joints.

These humble dwellings often consisted of one room and the roofs were of wooden shingles or bark held in place with poles.[55] Trees were seldom straight of trunk and limb, so there were many gaps in the walls, which the householders stuffed with clay in an attempt to keep out drafts.[56] Ellsworth has left a detailed description of the construction of one of these shelters and of the cooperative labor that went into it:

> Timber from 8 to 12 inches in diameter is cut and drawn to the place where the person intends to build his house. A Chestnut log is then cut and split up into shingles. The neighbours are invited to the raising, and the principle of doing unto others what we would they should do unto us seems to be a necessary principle to regulate their conduct, since the new establishment of settlers must depend on the mutual assistance of each other.
>
> A notch is then cut in the end of the logs so as to fit into each other when erected. The logs are laid in a horizontal position with as little space between them as possible. Yet they by no means form a tight joint whithout [*sic*] hewing since the logs are more or less crooked. The height of these huts is not so great as few of them have chambers . . . The floors are made of white oak plank . . . [but] a place 8 feet wide is left for the fire.[57]

Without such collective effort it is unlikely that the settlers could have long survived on the frontier. The cooperative labor of house building

contradicts the image of the mythical American frontier where rugged individualism was absolute. Indeed, the socialist writer Algie Simons asserts that frontier farming communities were often "far more co-operative than many a socialist colony."[58]

Frontier society was relatively egalitarian by British standards and with the Revolution the last vestiges of the semi-feudalism of early European settlement had died out. So, too, had the full-blooded feudalism that the British Crown hoped to impose on the lands west of the Appalachian chain, including what was to become Ohio. On the eve of the Revolution, a handful of men claimed title to the "vacant lands" beyond the permanent white settlements. The biggest landholder of all was the king, who claimed up to 380 million acres, including much of today's Ohio, followed by the Penn family. The Quebec Act of 1774 had imposed the French-Canadian system of tenure to lands north of the Ohio River. Land was to be parceled out to *seigneurs*, who would in turn exact various tithes, rents, and obligations from their future tenants. The Revolution did away with all of this, with Thomas Jefferson among the most vocal supporters of freehold land.[59] Jefferson was a speculator and slave-owner, but he genuinely favored the creation of an agrarian society based on a "virtuous" and industrious yeoman class in a country marked by an "immensity of land." "Those who labour in the earth are the chosen people of God," he claimed.[60]

The effects were immediately obvious to foreign visitors to the Reserve. Much of the newly opened-up lands had been grabbed by speculators, but as Simons observes, vacant land had no benefits if it were not used. The speculators would often re-sell land for a fat profit, but the poor folk who flocked over the Alleghenies were pleased to have it. "The English labourer," Griffiths claimed, "when he obtains a farm of his own, is more independent, and more respected than he would be in England; he obtains a livelihood more easily while he lives, and at death he may bequeath his property to his children."[61] Moreover, there were schools for his children. A small farmer told Griffiths, "the Western Reserve is the place for the poor man, there's no mistake about that."[62]

Nevertheless, a nascent class structure was crystallizing. As John Chester Miller argues in his book *The First Frontier*, the British settlers had brought with them from the very start of American colonization "a highly

developed sense of class, or, as they termed it, rank."[63] Simons argues that landless laborers in early New England were regarded as chattels,[64] and the facts of slavery and indentured labor are a matter of common knowledge. After 1776, the egalitarian possibilities of the American Revolution had been smothered by a counterrevolution, argues the historian Charles Beard,[65] and an establishment of merchants, capitalists, and landed gentry was firmly in the saddle.

This wealthy class was represented in the Reserve by men such as David Hudson, Simon Perkins, Dr. Thompson, the Atwater family, and the Ellsworths, most of whom hailed from "old" Connecticut. Their existing wealth in many cases enabled them to purchase vast tracts of land. The size of their landholdings and their wealth dwarfed that of the small farmers Griffiths describes. The Ellsworths had purchased over 40,000 acres near the mouth of the Cuyahoga. The Atwaters, who could trace their ancestry back to the early seventeenth century in New Haven, Connecticut, were linked by marriage to the Ellsworths and they too rose to prominence and acquired riches in the Reserve. General Simon Perkins (as he became) arrived in the Reserve as an agent of the Land Company in 1798. By the time of his death in 1844, he was Akron's leading citizen, with extensive grazing, manufacturing, and banking interests—and great political clout. His stone mansion still stands in the city today.

The gentry class also included eccentrics such as "Lord" Everett Farnham, who arrived at Richfield, Summit County, in 1811, purchased vast estates, and built a fabulous home. Farnham gave his holdings fanciful names such as "God's Heart" and "Abraham's Bosom," but he ruled over his hired hands like a Prussian Junker.[66] One suspects that his laborers didn't stay long. As John R. Commons argues in the monumental *History of Labor in the United States*, "the distinguishing feature from labor history in America is the wide expanse of free land." This enabled "the poor and industrious . . . [to] escape from the conditions which render[ed] them subject to other classes."[67] Sharp class divisions were blunted to some degree because in "the American West the hired hand was the potential farmer, the serving girl the future wife of the town's leading citizen." European visitors noted that many of those who worked in menial positions demanded to be treated as equals and that there was "nothing peasantlike about frontier farmers, even of the most humble status."[68]

This was very much a society in flux. In contrast with the typical European frontier, which Frederick Jackson Turner described as "a fortified boundary line running through dense populations," the Ohio frontier was part of a process of "perennial rebirth" that saw not merely "advance along a single line, but a return to primitive conditions on a continually advancing frontier line." This is Turner's celebrated "frontier thesis." "The wilderness masters the colonist," he continues:

> It finds him a European in dress, industries, tools, modes of travel, and thought. It takes him from the railroad and puts him in a birch canoe. It strips off the garments of civilization and arrays him in the hunting shirt and the moccasin. It puts him in the log cabin of the Cherokee and Iroquois.[69]

A decade or so after Daniel Haines trekked up the Cuyahoga, small industries were emerging to cater for the local market and there was some export of commodities, chiefly agricultural. Akron's first store opened for business in 1815, catering for the influx of settlers after the end of the War of 1812. Other buildings included a tavern and a two-story frame structure known as the Mammoth Store.[70] In 1825, the *Ohio State Journal* reported, "A new town has been born and they call it Akron." By this time, continued the reporter, "The village of Akron already contains three or four stores, a number of groceries and mechanical shops of different kinds and a few dwelling houses."[71]

Akron was by no means a boomtown and the Western Reserve as a whole was as yet a largely precapitalist society of small producers—many of them subsistence farmers—with a layer of landed gentry, merchants, and small-scale commodity production. The primitive state of communications was also holding back the agricultural and industrial development of Akron and surrounding districts. Accordingly, the citizens' minds had turned to the idea, canvassed earlier by Washington and Jefferson, of cutting a canal to link Lake Erie with the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers. Such an undertaking, it was hoped, could open up the region to the markets of the East Coast, the southern states, and the world beyond.

These hopes were not misplaced, although the settlers had some years to wait before they were realized. A local journalist has left us some details of the opening of the canal.[72] On the morning of July 3, 1827, most of the 200 or so inhabitants of Akron made their way to the village center, where they jostled for shade on the porch of Benedict's two-story Mammoth Store or sheltered under the trees, craning their necks for a better view of the festivities. The object of their attention, the *State of Ohio*, floated at Lock One on the brand-new Ohio and Erie Canal, the ribbon of silver and black water that now linked Akron in Summit County with Cleveland, Cuyahoga County, on Lake Erie. A few years later, the canal was completed, linking Akron and Cleveland with the Ohio River near Portsmouth, Scioto County.

At the boat's launch down the canal there were speeches, one of them delivered by Henry Richards, the *Ohio*'s skipper. Artillery thundered out "national salute." Then, to loud huzzas and cheers, the *Ohio* slipped her moorings to commence her maiden voyage. Among the party of dignitaries making the inaugural voyage was Ohio's governor, Allen Trimble. Very patriotically, the Ohio docked at Cleveland the next day, on the Fourth of July, to scenes of wild rejoicing.

The canal between Cleveland and Akron was built between 1825 and 1827. It would take another five years before it reached its southern terminus at Portsmouth on the Ohio River, 309 miles from Lake Erie.[73] The canal's construction was a colossal undertaking for the time. Huge amounts of capital had to be accumulated to finance the building of the "Big Ditch." The geographical scope of the enterprise also meant that canal construction at this time was more problematic than setting up the early factories of the Industrial Revolution.

Hiring the workforce for the project was itself a major hurdle. When construction began, the contractors had assembled 5,000 workers, a veritable army for the time, many of them immigrants from Ireland and Germany. Many immigrant workers were deeply indebted even before they struck pick or shovel into the Ohio soil, having had to repay the cost of their passage to the New World.[74]

Working with—or against—the Ohio wilderness was the hardest part of the job. A local adage holds that "Ohio's wilderness was so thick that a

squirrel could cross from one side of the state to the other without setting foot on the ground." Before construction work could commence, the men had to clear a path through the forest with axes, mattocks, and saws. The excavation work itself was hard, relentless, often dangerous, and ill-paid, with men toiling in muck and water sometimes up to their waists from dawn to dusk for around six dollars a month,[75] or between 30 and 50 cents a day according to other writers.[76] Often, a proportion of their wages came in the form of hard liquor.[77] In one instance, workers staged a spontaneous sit-down strike when contractors tried to cut out the ration.[78] Further strikes erupted in 1827 when the contractors cut pay, and while this forced the canal commissioners to guarantee minimum rates, the gang bosses continued to cheat on wages. The exorbitant prices charged in company stores were a perennial source of discontent.[79]

Clouds of mosquitoes maddened the diggers during the warmer months and hundreds died of malarial-type illnesses or "swamp fever," which appears to have been cholera and/or typhoid.[80] Others died of smallpox.[81] Beasts of burden while alive, they were buried without ceremony when they died. As late as the 1930s, their bones were sometimes disinterred beneath the North Hill viaduct in Akron on the site of the old "Dublin" shantytown.[82]

Most of the work was carried out with picks, shovels, and wheelbarrows. One of the toughest sections involved cutting through a rise near Ravenna. Indeed, so hard was the ground there that a team of oxen was brought in to pull a plow to cut furrows in the clay, a labor-saving device that was said to have done the work of a hundred men.[83]

The canal was trapezoidal in section, forty feet wide at the top, tapering to twenty-six feet at the bottom with a minimum depth of four feet. It was lined with impervious clay to prevent the water from seeping away. The earth excavated from the bed of the canal was heaped up and flattened along the side into the towpath, which was ten feet wide.[84] On the opposite side of the canal the earth was heaped up into a "berm," perhaps five feet wide.

Even if the terrain had been flat and level, construction of the canal would have meant the excavation, largely by hand, of almost 700,000 cubic feet of soil and rock per mile, or around thirty-seven million cubic feet of earth over the entire distance of the canal. This is a conservative estimate,

given the hilly nature of much of the terrain. By way of comparison, *if the excavated earth were to be heaped up it would form a pile with the same ground level area of the Empire State Building, but over three times higher than that structure's 1453 feet*.[85] "When completed," claimed one writer, "it would be the largest single engineering earthwork in the world at that time."[86] The locks—each ninety feet long and fifteen feet wide on the inside—had a ten-foot lift, or step-up. They were made of dressed and mortared stone blocks (each weighing between two and four tons) with oak sluice gates,[87] the work of skilled carpenters and stonemasons. When finished in 1832, the canal had cost $790,000,[88] which is equivalent to billions of dollars in today's prices.[89] The canal raised boats from 573 feet at Lake Erie to 964.6 feet at Lock One in Akron (just west of the intersection of Main and Exchange Streets), then took them down to 468 feet at Portsmouth on the Ohio River.

It was the beginning of a new era on the Cuyahoga. The economic historian Peter Way noted that Karl Marx had

> called England's railway navvies "the light cavalry of capitalism," skirmishers at the forefront of both economic development and class struggle. In much the same way, canallers were miners and sappers digging the earthworks of North American capitalism, agents of change burying the past and digging the trenches of a future world of industrial production with every spadeful of earth turned.[90]

Soon barges laden with agricultural produce, industrial raw materials and manufactured goods were being freighted along the canal. The canal laid the basis for the integration of the region into the burgeoning capitalist society of North America. By feeding the slaves of the southern plantations,[91] the Western Reserve's farm produce contributed to the development of the world capitalist system, and in particular the British cotton industry, which relied on imported American raw materials produced by the "Peculiar Institution." More abundant and reliable supplies of foodstuffs also contributed to the industrial and urban development of the eastern states.

The canal also boosted Akron's trade and industry. Settlements sprang up at the numerous locks that slowed canal traffic. Sawmills and boat-building yards were created to build the canal boats themselves and to fill them with cargoes. Distilleries, breweries, and a range of food processing, mining, quarrying, smelting, and other enterprises grew up to provide for the local and export markets. These enterprises in turn called for greater numbers of workers, boosting population and therefore increasing the demand for agricultural and industrial products. Coal from the Akron region was barged to Cleveland, where it fired the boilers of Lake Erie steamers, and the later blast furnaces.[92] The agricultural boom in turn stimulated the growth of a thriving agricultural implement and machinery industry in the town. There were also thousands of sheep on the hills around Akron, the basis for a prosperous woolen industry.[93] The population of the infant town grew steadily. Although almost abandoned because of a severe epidemic in 1830, it revived and prospered. "Gale's Record Book of the Village of Akron" reveals that by 1835 it boasted a population of 151 families, along with fifteen stores, four taverns, three flour mills, four blast furnaces, a distillery, three bakeries, three shoe shops, one chair factory, one carding works, one wheelwright's workshop, three schools, six doctors, three ministers, and six lawyers.[94] By 1836, Akron was importing $500,000 worth of goods per annum and exporting $400,000 worth. Recession struck in 1837,[95] but by 1840 business was booming and Akron boasted of being "the wheat center of the West."[96] None of this would have been possible without the Big Ditch. As Howard Wolf put it, Akron was "a child of artificially produced opportunity,"[97] and lucky to be on the line of the canal.

The frontier, meanwhile, had moved west in a process of constant re-creation. Frederick Turner wrote,

> The United States lies like a huge page in the history of society. Line by line as we read this historical page from West to East we find the record of social evolution. It begins with the Indian and the hunter, it goes on to tell of the disintegration of savagery by the entrance of the trade, the pathfinder of civilization.[98]

In this view, white settlement was a process of linear mechanical progress from lower to higher; from barbarism to ever higher pinnacles of civilization. The reality is more complex and can be expressed in Pablo Picasso's dialectical insight that "every act of creation is first an act of destruction." "Capitalism is an enormously dynamic system," writes Martin Empson. "It produces tremendous wealth, yet at the same time it breeds poverty and destruction."[99] This was true of the deadly toll of canal construction, which is commonly believed to have cost the life of one Irish navvy per mile. It is even truer of the price paid by the American Indians of the Cuyahoga and the natural ecosystem that was their home.

# 2

# The Ecological Cost of Transformation

> Fifty three years have nearly elapsed since the first surveys and settlements were made on the Connecticut Western Reserve. Within that period of time a perfect revolution has been effected in its condition. Its forests have been displaced by farms, villages and cities; canals, railroads, and other important thoroughfares are extending in every direction; telegraphs are furnishing increased facilities for communication; commerce has spread over the Lake, and the whole face of nature has been changed.[100]—JARED KIRTLAND

Akron, in the words of the local poet David Brendan Hopes, lives on "the skeleton of an ice monster a mile high."[101] Its hills and valleys are the last folds of the Alleghenies. Farther west and south the hills run out into the wide Midwest plains. The landscape is deeply dissected, but of modest elevation; no higher than 430 feet above Lake Erie, which itself lies at 573 feet above sea level. Summit County straddles the watershed dividing the two great drainage basins of the St. Lawrence and the Mississippi. For centuries, the American Indians carried their birch-bark canoes between the basins along the Portage Path atop the great continental divide, through what are now the suburbs of Akron. Most likely the portage was shorter than it is today; perhaps no longer than one mile,[102] and Summit Lake possibly drained north to the river before it was lowered by canal construction and the depletion of forest cover.[103]

Summit County is a humid landscape, full of what the nineteenth-century poet John Whittier called "that old voice of water, of birds and of breeze, the dip of the wildfowl, the rustling of trees."[104] Winters are cold,

but the summers are almost sub-tropical in their heat and damp, with frequent cloudbursts. Creeks and rivers abound, the principal stream being the Cuyahoga.[105] Relatively sluggish for much of its course, the river flows through a deep gorge north of the city and is remarkably sinuous, hence its name, which according to local accounts is derived from *Ka-ihogh-ha*, the Mohawk word for "crooked."[106] The river is about 90 miles long and rises in the hills of Geuga County, high above Lake Erie before heading inland to Akron before turning north toward Cleveland.[107]

## *The Flora and Fauna of the Reserve*

In 1797, the Land Company surveyor Moses Warren made a "field traverse" of the portage from the Cuyahoga Valley to the Tuscarawas River, which flows south of Akron towards the Ohio River. The land was "uneven," he noted, but except for "the break of the Cayahoga hill," it would "admit of an excellent road," and was "almost the whole distance good, arable & pasture land" with some "tolerable building stone" available.[108] The traverse was thickly forested with oak, hickory, black walnut, elm, ash, maple, and butternut box trees, which promised a fine yield of lumber. His observations were echoed by another early European visitor, the Moravian missionary John Heckewelder, whom we shall often encounter in this narrative. Heckewelder also noted some large open plains and swamps in the vicinity.[109] These plains, the historian William Perrin later observed, had "in a state of nature . . . the aspect of the prairies of the West . . . [being] almost destitute of timber . . . and covered with grass and scrub-oak . . ."[110] Heckewelder had also noticed "lofty chestnuts," poplars, and sycamores, with cherry and mulberry trees on the "rich bottoms" of the river. Hawthorn bushes were numerous, along with grapevines and wild hops "of an excellent quality." In places, he tells us, the ground was "entirely covered in high nettles," which rendered passage difficult.[111] His fellow Moravian missionary, David Zeisberger (who will also figure prominently in this book), lists a profusion of wild fruits, nuts, and vegetables and adds spruce, pitch-pine, red cedar, and firs to the list of trees.[112] James Smith spent some time in the district during the mid-eighteenth century as an involuntary guest of the local American Indians. He too had a keen botanical eye and

remembered black-oak, walnut, hickory, cherry, black-ash, white-ash, water-ash, buckeye, black-locust, honey-locust, sugar-tree, elm, and white-oak, or "beach" (beech). On the valley bottoms in particular he saw "large quantities of wild apple, plum and red-and black-haw trees."[113] Lush green in summer, the forests were a riot of reds, yellows, russets, and oranges in the fall. Shaded by the forest, the soil was rich in humus, from which sprouted a myriad of smaller plants. "From the earliest days of spring till the close of autumn," wrote the renowned naturalist Jared Kirtland in 1850, "a splendid show of flowers was exhibited that varied from time to time as one species after another developed its inflorescence."[114]

The many waterways were well stocked with fish, including the Great Lakes sturgeon; different types of perch; catfish; silver, large and small mouthed bass; bullheads; walleyed pike and muskies; bream; and jack salmon.[115] The Connecticut physician Zerah Hawley mentions abundant whitefish and musculunge,[116] or muskellunge, a good-eating fish that grows to as much as fifteen pounds in weight. Zeisberger noted blackfish, buffalo fish, and eels, along with two varieties of shellfish and the river tortoise.[117] Kirtland tells us that once the rivers "abounded with large and valuable species of fish, which in their vernal migrations, crowded in immense shoals on the ripples."[118] Fish swam in "in vast numbers" at the base of Cuyahoga Falls, which blocked their access to the river's higher reaches, Heckewelder adds.[119] Animals abounded. Deer and bears were plentiful. There were cougars, wolves, grey foxes, martens and muskrats, black and grey squirrels, polecats, groundhogs, opossums, mink, weasels, raccoons, porcupines, and rabbits. Otters and beavers swam in the lakes and rivers. Zeisberger saw hares, moose, dark-brown buffaloes, and lynxes, which were as "large as dogs" and very savage.[120] The latter were probably the fabulous "woolynigs" that settlers claimed to have seen prowling the forests.[121]

The skies were full of birds. Ravens, hawks, and waterfowl were plentiful especially ducks, wild geese, cranes, sheldrakes, wild swans, and turkeys.[122] Bald and golden eagles were common during colder weather. Other raptors included red-tailed, red-shouldered, broad-winged, swallow-tailed, and Cooper's hawks. The "pileated wood-cock" or woodpecker was common and there were enormous flocks of wild pigeons. Blackbirds were ubiquitous, along with smaller species such as robins, bluebirds, thrushes,

and catbirds.[123] Pheasants, heath grouse, and partridges could be found in the underbrush, together with pairs of turtledoves. Much less appealing were the rattlesnakes, copperheads, and vipers, which Zeisberger observed were "so numerous that it is remarkable that the Indians who spend much of their time in the forests are not bitten oftener."[124]

## *The Great Slaughter*

Today, the woods around Akron are still lush and cool. Silence reigns, broken only by the tinkling of water, birdcalls, and the murmur of wind in the treetops. Any feeling of remoteness or pristinity, however, is an illusion. The woods, nevertheless, hint at what this place was like before Akron, before the arrival of the white settlers. The changes, when they came, were swift and often irreversible. Over a century and a half ago, Kirtland lamented the transformation wrought by the Europeans:

> [the] universal forest has been so far destroyed, that only broken patches remain, mere shadows of its former stateliness. These are now much exposed to the sun, winds and frosts, that they have lost much of their verdant and luxuriant appearance.—The same exposure to the elements has, in a great measure, dissipated the rich native soil; and the beautiful investments of shrubs and herbaceous plants has been destroyed by repeated browsing and cropping of domestic animals. Many interesting and beautiful species have entirely disappeared from our flora.[125]

Few might mourn the near extermination of the poisonous snakes that once infested the region, but many inoffensive creatures were affected, some vanishing altogether. The flourishing fish populations steeply declined, and the mighty sturgeon was critically endangered.[126] By the 1820s, writes the physician Zerah Hawley, the musculunge fish, which was once very abundant in the rivers of the Reserve, was "seldom seen."[127]

Bears, wolves, lynxes, and other mammals had also been numerous around Akron. They too perished in their droves. Individual bears were

caught in heavy steel traps or shot, often for food at first, but later apparently out of sheer bloodlust. Mass bear-hunts were organized around Tallmadge in the winter of 1824–25, with the men killing the creatures with sticks, guns, and pitchforks. The bears were soon exterminated or driven away.[128] In 1818, a mass slaughter of wildlife known as the Hinckley Hunt was organized in Richfield Township. Armed with guns, pitchforks, drums, horns, bells, and tin cans, men and boys drove an assortment of animals to their doom. These included four hundred deer, seventeen wolves, twenty-one bears, and other game.[129]

By Kirtland's time, few of the region's magnificent eagles remained. The once "fabulous numbers" of wild pigeons were almost extinct. The settlers stifled them with sulfur fumes then knocked them out of the sky with poles. In Zeisberger's time, the sky had been "darkened by their flight," but a few decades later they suddenly disappeared. This, notes William Barnholth, was partly as a result of the draining of marshes, but generally because of "the avarice and thoughtlessness of men."[130] Foxes, otters, wolves, moose, elk, deer, cougars, buffaloes, and a variety of other animals fell before the settlers' guns in huge numbers, some species never to recover.[131] It was a great slaughter, comparable perhaps only with the effects of climate change, as, for instance, in the last Ice Age.

Some of the great species' decline *preceded* permanent white settlement in the region. This is the case with the Cuyahoga's beavers. Beaver pelts were coveted by the clothiers and hatters of Europe and the eastern seaboard, particularly for the manufacture of top hats. In 1785, Heckewelder wrote, "a Trader purchased 28 horse loads of Peltry from the few Indians then hunting on the Cuyahoga River."[132]

Before the arrival of the trappers, the Indians' sole interest in beaver pelts lay in their *use value* in making warm clothing for winter. They took only as many pelts as they needed to satisfy their immediate wants. Beaver hunting was ecologically sustainable. The Europeans, on the other hand, were interested in the *exchange value* of the hides: the aim was to accumulate the maximum profits in the shortest time. As a result the thriving beaver colonies completely vanished from the Cuyahoga and its tributaries. So great was the slaughter that it is only very recently that beavers have returned to the river after an absence of more than a century.[133]

A parallel, social effect of the fur trade was that the Cuyahoga Indians were drawn into the market economy of white American society and were exposed to new, contagious illnesses. They became dependent on European goods—for example, clothing, ironware, linen cloth, firearms, and liquor—and this led inexorably to the breakdown of their old collective society.[134]

While there is evidence of ecological disturbance in Pre-Columbian America, we should not overstate it, for the effects of Native American occupation pale in comparison with the changes wrought by European settlement. Writing in 1850, Kirtland paints a melancholy picture of its effects:

> [t]he gun, the axe, and the plough, together with the depredations of domestic animals, have effected extensive changes in the condition of the animal and vegetable kingdom . . . Most of the native fruits, like the Indian, have been blasted by the approach of the white man, and have entirely disappeared or become barren . . .[135]

Not since the glaciers scoured the land during the last Ice Age had so great a devastation occurred.

## *An Ecological Ethic*

Today, almost 700,000 people live in the Greater Akron statistical area, a fraction more than 200,000 reside in the city proper and around four million people live in the Akron-Cleveland district.[136] One might forget that there were human beings here thousands of years before Europeans first set foot in the region.

In 1991, the Smithsonian Institution characterized Pre-Columbian America as "the first Eden, a pristine natural kingdom . . . [where] the native people were transparent in the landscape, living as natural elements of the ecosphere." "Their world, the New World of Columbus," the writer continues, "was a world of barely perceptible human disturbance."[137] We should be wary of the claim. Human beings always impact on the natural world around them in order to satisfy basic needs. Hunting animals, fishing,

collecting wild fruits, or cutting trees for building, and even gathering down-wood for fuel, affects the biosphere. While the Reserve was a bountiful land rich in flora and fauna, and undeveloped by today's standards, humans had long lived there and left many traces of their presence.

However, in comparison with the world the settlers brought with them, the Indians' numbers were far smaller, their technology simpler, their wants and needs fewer. At best, too, they practiced an ecological ethic, taking only what they needed from nature, devoid of the avarice of capitalism with its impulse of accumulation. While the Native American peoples planted maize in the silty elbows of the Cuyahoga, its waters still ran sweet and full of aquatic life. In contrast, signs on the riverbank just north of Akron today warn passers by against contact with the water. The beavers may have returned and the river is no longer in danger of catching fire, as it did on occasion in the 1960s at Cleveland, but the water is still unsafe to drink or to bathe in.

The mythology of the "pristine natural kingdom" also contains an ideological subtext that patronizes and dehumanizes the Native American peoples, reduces them to the status of passive ciphers, justifies their dispossession by the white settlers, and distorts the nature of the land itself. The Canadian anthropologist Bruce J. Trigger argued that the stereotypical picture of the barbarous frontier reinforces John Locke's version of the doctrine of *terra nullius*—"empty land"—used to justify the seizure of indigenous land on the grounds that the "savages" didn't use it "productively."[138] Locke's view was that of the settlers' New England forebears, one of whom stated that in "a vacant soyle, hee that hath taken possession of it, and bestoweth culture and husbandry upon it, his Right it is . . ."[139]

This is borne out in the statements of the colonizers themselves. In 1827, for example, Akron's *Portage Journal* proudly reported on the opening of the Ohio and Erie Canal by the state governor. Before its completion, the *Journal* believed, the country was full of the "howling of ferocious beasts, the hissing of deadly reptiles . . . [and] the heart chilling yells of Indian savages."[140] The elision of savages with serpents and carnivorous animals is revealing: feral beasts in human form could with clear conscience be exterminated or driven off along with the rattlesnakes and bears.

According to popular wisdom then, North America was virgin land just waiting for the white settlers. In a July 4, 1876, address at Cuyahoga Falls, the Reverend T. B. Fairchild declared, "Everything was as it came from the Creator's hand."[141] To the contrary, there is evidence that humankind has lived in what became Summit County for at least 12,000 years and possibly for 16,000.[142] It is also possible that humans lived in the region before the last Ice Age, although the glaciers would have destroyed all signs of habitation. Regardless, the many hundreds of generations have left myriad ecological footprints and archaeological clues.

In northeast Ohio, American Indians transformed their world in many ways. Scrubland was burned to create meadows and savannah grasslands. Animals were hunted for food and furs. Timber was harvested and crops were planted. Roads, embankments, earthworks, and settlements of varying degrees of technological sophistication were built. Many of the changes they wrought remain visible.

As early as 1921, the Ohio Historical Society published an archaeological map that showed a thick band of the remains of ancient settlements along the Cuyahoga.[143] In 1980, Case Western University's Professor David Bush unearthed a 9,000-year-old knife in the valley.[144] In a survey published in the same year, Joseph D. Jesensky, an amateur but conscientious archaeologist, noted the presence of scattered hilltop forts on ridges, artificial ditches, burial mounds, and "innumerable stone and flint implements" thrown up by farmers after each plowing in the valley. Much of the archaeological record, he lamented, had been disturbed by road building and settlement.[145] More recently, Fred Finney's 2002 study pinpointed 265 archaeological sites in the valley, but he estimated that there might have been as many as 328.[146]

Archaeologists have revealed a great deal about the lives and culture of the so-called "Paleo-Indians" who lived in the region in the millennia between the end of the Ice Age and modern times. The "Mound Builders," who occupied large areas of what is now Ohio for some 1700 years, built earthworks so large that early white settlers thought them part of the natural terrain. These include mounds at Newburg and Boston,[147] Fort Island in the Copley Swamp,[148] and at Botzum[149] just downstream from Akron. Detailed examination of this period is beyond the scope of this book, but the reader might like to consult Virginia Chase Bloetscher's 1981 book *Indians of the*

*Cuyahoga Valley* for an overview of the customs and history of successive waves of people in the region.[150]

Many of the early white settlers could not conceive that American Indians had built the mounds. The mound builders were mentioned in the wild fantasies of the *Book of Mormon*,[151] and their earthworks attributed at various times to Phoenicians, peripatetic Vikings, and refugees from Atlantis, Welshmen, and even a race of defunct giants![152] As Bruce Trigger argues, "the most important single factor that has shaped the long-term development of American archaeology has been the traditional Euroamerican stereotype which portrayed America's native peoples as being inherently unprogressive."[153]

Nevertheless, the environmental effects of many thousands of years of American Indian presence pale in comparison with the disastrous impact of white settlement. One who observed the changes was the Ohio savant Jared Kirtland. A physician by training, a politician by avocation, and a naturalist and geologist by inclination, Kirtland focused a sharp and intelligent eye on the ecology of the Reserve.

Kirtland was uncomfortably aware of the destruction wrought during the first fifty years of white settlement. Most of his contemporaries were heedless of the devastation, seeing it as the acceptable price of progress. We can trace the origins of modern ecological science to the Enlightenment of the eighteenth century, but the seminal ideas of James Hutton, John Playfair, or Alexander von Humboldt did not penetrate frontier society.[154] As Peter J. Bowler observes in his book *The Earth Encompassed*, "a small number of late-nineteenth century thinkers did begin to warn against the dangers of pollution and environmental exhaustion, but they were as yet in a minority. The majority was still not ready to abandon the belief that humankind was intended to dominate the earth."[155]

Nature had created a paradise in the Western Reserve (modified of course by the activities of the Native American peoples), but the settlers seemed intent on wrecking it as their God-given right. As Ernest Brunken observed, "the backwoodsman . . . derived his sustenance from the woods, but he did so by destroying them."[156] The natural systems of Summit County had taken millennia to establish since the retreat of the glaciers. The forests and prairies were vast, but they proved fragile in the face of the onslaught of the settlers. White settlement also destroyed the habitat, and

thus the basis for the culture and the traditional economies of the American Indian peoples of the region.

# 3

# The Cuyahoga Valley on the Eve of White Settlement

O stream of Hopocan! If answer of thine
Could raise from thy waters to question of mine,
Methinks through the din of thy thronged banks a moan
Of sorrow would swell for the days that are gone.
Not for the dull jar of the loom and the wheel,
The gliding of shuttles, the ringing of steel
But that old voice of water, of birds and of breeze,
The dip of the wild fowl, the rustling of trees.[157]

European contact marked the start of a distinct historical period in the Americas. The Post-Columbian or "Historic" period follows the landing of Christopher Columbus in 1492. European expansion was uneven, however. It was probably not until at least 200 years after Columbus's first arrival in the Caribbean, 150 years after the first Spanish settlements in Florida, and some decades after the French founded Quebec City in 1608, that the first Europeans appeared in the Cuyahoga Valley. What we know of this period derives from the archaeological record and, less reliably, from derivative French sources.

The American Indians who lived in the valley at the time are shadowy figures on the historical canvas. These were the Erie, or "Cat" people, who are believed to have lived in twenty-eight large villages scattered along

Lake Erie and up the Cuyahoga River to the Portage lakes.[158] According to Bloetscher, the Eries lived in northeastern Ohio for 600 years before the French settled on the lower St. Lawrence, and for fifty years afterwards.[159] However, historian Daniel Anker reminds us that "[n]o record exists of a European setting foot in an Erie village."[160] Much of what we know is based on oral reports given to Montreal Jesuits by the Eries' Seneca and Onondaga enemies and recorded in the massive collection of French-language texts known as *Jesuit Relations*. [161] We cannot be certain whether the Eries were one or more peoples, or a federation like their Iroquois rivals. Yet there are tantalizing references to an already vanished people in the accounts of some early European visitors. In 1811, Henry Leavitt Ellsworth recorded the discovery of a mass Indian grave at Hammondsburgh (today's Bath Township in western Summit County), surmounted by trees at least two hundred years old.[162]

We cannot even be sure of how the Eries came to be known as the Cat People, or *chat sauvage* in French. Was it because they wore the skins and heads of cougars or mountain lions? Was the North American panther their totem? The Iroquois called them the *Erieehronons*—the "people of the long tail"—perhaps because they ornamented themselves with raccoon tails, which might also account for the cat appellation.[163]

It is believed that the Eries were a powerful and warlike people, numbering around 12,000 at the time the French settled in Quebec.[164] Wedged between hostile neighbors, these apparent Spartans of the New World forests lived in fortified villages built on high land behind stockades and ditches and were said to have lived by fishing, hunting, and horticulture.[165] By the Jesuits' accounts, they were a tall, strong people, spoke a language similar to Huron and Seneca, and lived in wigwam dwellings fourteen to twenty-one feet in diameter.[166] According to the nineteenth-century writer P. P. Cherry, there was a large Erie settlement near the Big Falls on the Cuyahoga just north of Akron.[167] Fort Island in the Copley Swamp may also have been the site of another village. The center of the latter village was an approximately fifteen-foot-high hillock about 350 feet long by 200 feet wide and elliptical in shape. Early white settlers found many Indian flints there.[168]

The Eries' downfall began after fifty years of skirmishing when, circa 1570, their foes united in the Five Nation Iroquois federation (an alliance of

Mohawk, Oneida, Onondaga, Cayuga, and Seneca peoples). The scales were further tipped against them in the seventeenth century when the Five Nations acquired firearms from the Dutch colonists at Manhattan. Clubs, spears, and bows and arrows were no match against muskets even when the weapons' tips were poisoned with rotten bear's liver and rattlesnake venom.[169]

In 1647, according to the Jesuits, the Eries were forced inland from Lake Erie, up the valleys of the Chagrin, Rocky, and Cuyahoga Rivers. In 1655, they were decisively defeated at the Battle of Fort Island. Bloetscher tells us that those not slain were "adopted" by the Five Nations and thus assimilated. Stragglers were captured or killed by 1660.[170] Archaeologist Fred Finney cautions against the popular account that the Eries disappeared or were totally exterminated. He argues that just as from the mid-eighteenth century onwards groups of Native Americans trekked to Wisconsin and Michigan to escape the "hostile operations" of the Five Nations, so might the Eries have fled westward after the catastrophe of the mid-seventeenth century.[171]

## *Fleeing the Encroaching Settlers*

What seems certain, however, is that after the Eries' disappearance, the Cuyahoga region became a depopulated "no-man's land" and remained so for over half a century. During that time, the permanent settlements and fields along the valley fell into disuse and the territory remained unfilled. It was not until the 1730s that groups of Shawnees and Wyandots settled in the region, joined later by Senecas, Cayugas, Oneidas, Onondagas, Mohawks, Delawares, Mohicans, Abenakis, and Chippewas fleeing the encroaching white settlers to the east.[172] By the turn of the eighteenth century, many more East Coast Native Americans had retreated over the Allegheny Mountains. Some found their way into the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas valleys.

The story of the "Delaware" people is a case in point. The Delawares originally lived on the Atlantic coast. They first encountered Europeans when the Dutch settled at Manhattan Island in 1609. They called themselves either *Woapanachke*—People from the Rising Sun—or more

usually *Lenni Lenape*, which simply means The People. The appellation Delaware is singularly inappropriate, as it is derived from the name of the English aristocrat, Lord Delaware (or de la Warr), the governor of the Jamestown colony, who had stolen some of their lands.[173] Driven from their ancestral lands, the Lenape first resettled in eastern Pennsylvania. Zeisberger learned that some very old Delawares clearly recalled the time when they had lived at Philadelphia.[174] In 1682, they sold their new lands to William Penn and moved to the Susquehanna Valley. There, in a region left empty after the wars between the Iroquois and Erie peoples, they were to find a period of sanctuary that lasted for approximately forty years.

After being defrauded of their Pennsylvanian lands in the notorious "Walking Purchase" of 1727, the Lenape crossed over the Alleghenies, with many settling in the valleys of the Cuyahoga and Tuscarawas Rivers.[175] The Penn family had defrauded the Lenape of 1,200,000 acres and expelled them from the land.[176] (In 2004, the Delaware Nation took legal action to reclaim a symbolic 314 acres of the stolen land.[177] The court ruled that although the land had been taken by fraud, the case was non-justiciable. The ruling was upheld by an appeals court in 2006, and the U.S. Supreme Court refused to hear a further appeal.[178])

The numbers of dispossessed Native Americans in the Cuyahoga region grew steadily as a result of pressure of white settlement, legal chicanery, and violence back east over the Alleghenies. By the 1750s, for instance, there were two American Indian villages at Big Falls on the Cuyahoga: one on the north side inhabited by Lenape under the sexagenarian Turtle Clan chief Netawatwees, and an Iroquois village on the opposite bank. "Between 1760 and 1790," writes Fetzer, "dozens of Indian villages were located in the immediate vicinity of Akron."[179] There was also a large Lenape (Delaware) village near today's Cuyahoga Falls and another near the present-day Sand Run Metro Park. Further upstream, near the contemporary township of Streetsboro, was Chief John Bigson's Seneca village. By 1800, there were two large Mingo villages at Silver Lake, Stow, under the leadership of Chief Wagmong. The Lenapes had built another village at Turkeyfoot Lake and the legendary warrior Chief Hopocan's people lived in a series of villages between Long and Nesmith Lakes in today's Coventry Township.[180] The fabled warrior Chief Pontiac may also have had a village on the Cuyahoga during this time.[181] Early white settler Emily Nash

recalled that in her childhood, before the War of 1812, both banks of the Cuyahoga were "covered thick with Indian arrows and stone where they built the Wigwams and cleared the land."[182] By the end of the eighteenth century, according to Cherry, the Cuyahoga Valley had "the largest aboriginal population to the square mile" in all of the Northwest Territories except for the Detroit region.[183]

## *The Moravian Missionaries*

During the late-eighteenth century, the Moravian Protestant missionaries David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder lived and preached among the American Indians of the frontier. Their detailed accounts of their experiences provide the basis for a great deal of what we know about the Native American peoples. Both men remained with the American Indians throughout their adult lives and came to respect and understand them to a degree remarkable for the times. Both men learned several American Indian languages and Zeisberger translated a great deal of religious material. He also made several grammatical studies of Native American languages, with both English and German equivalents.

David Zeisberger was born in 1721 in the Sudetenland, then part of the Austro-Hungarian Empire. In 1727, his parents fled to nearby Saxony to escape religious persecution at the hands of the Catholic authorities. His family migrated to the newly-founded Moravian settlement of Savannah, Georgia, in the late 1730s. The Moravians today concentrate on missionary work among "the poorest and most despised people of the world."[184] This was also the case in the eighteenth century. Zeisberger first lived among the Mohawk Indians in upstate New York in 1745. He began his work as a missionary in 1749, following his ordination as a Moravian minister.

After 1767, Zeisberger worked among the remaining Lenape of Pennsylvania, where he came into conflict with the British authorities because of his advocacy on behalf of the local Indian people. He later crossed over the Alleghenies to the Tuscarawas-Muskingum region, where he lived until 1781 and founded the settlements of Gnadenhütten, Lichtenau, and Schoenbrünn. Afterwards, following a massacre of his flock at Gnadenhütten by American militiamen, he was forced to flee with the survivors to Sandusky on Lake Erie and thence to Michigan. Later, he

returned to found a short-lived settlement at Pilgerruh—Pilgrim's Rest—at the confluence of Tinker's Creek and the Cuyahoga, where some ruins remain today. Between 1791 and 1797, he lived with his converts in Canadian exile before returning to the Muskingum River, south of today's Akron. This remarkable man died in the winter of 1808 and was buried in a Native American graveyard at Goshen, near New Philadelphia, Tuscarawas County, Ohio.[185]

Zeisberger was a religious zealot and Eurocentric in many ways, but he came to love the Indians. He was even prepared to adopt some of their customs, although he could never understand their collectivist ethos and was puzzled by their rejection of private property. His assessment of the Lenape was contradictory. He considered them to be lazy, deceitful, "and at the same time, credulous." They imagined themselves as "great lords," he complained, "even the most miserable among them," which was surely a backhanded way of saying that they were an egalitarian people whose social order was very different from class-bound European society. Egalitarianism was also a feature of many, but by no means all, American Indian societies. According to the anthropologist Lewis Henry Morgan, for instance, the Iroquois "were equal in privileges and in personal rights, the sachem [members of the Iroquois federation governing body] and the chiefs claiming no superiority . . . Liberty, equality and fraternity, though never formulated, were cardinal principles of the gens."[186] Eleanor Burke Leacock's field study of the Montagnais-Naskari (Innu) people of Labrador revealed an ingrained egalitarianism that centuries of European influence—and indeed deliberate cultural intervention—had not obliterated.[187]

Ever the straitlaced clergyman, Zeisberger disapproved of the Lenapes' late-night dancing sessions and frowned on what he regarded as their tendency to "wander about in a disorderly fashion." Dancing, however, was part of religious ritual in many Native American societies such as the Iroquois and it was probably the same with the Lenapes.[188] Zeisberger was also shocked by what he considered the "impurity and immorality, even gross sensuality and unnatural vice [that] flourish among them." In a later passage, however, he admits that theft was "disgrace among them" and admits that they generally treated each other with "kindness and civility."[189]

These latter observations are supported by other settlers' accounts. In *Recollections of an Old Settler*, Christian Cackler, who lived among the

Senecas and learned their way of life, recounts that the Native Americans lacked "the selfish and covetous disposition of the white men." He also writes that they "would kill nothing unless they wanted it for their present use."[190]

The account of James Smith, who was held captive by Delaware and Conestoga (Susquehhaock) Indians on the Cuyahoga for several years after 1755, recounts an episode when his captors left behind a wooden framework next to the Portage Path, which they had built to stretch and cure animal skins. Upon their return many weeks later, the skins were still there, despite the passage of many other tribes along the path. Smith observed that it was "seldom that Indians do steal any thing from one another."[191]

## *"False Picture" of Wicked Savages*

In addition to finding their way of life far more egalitarian, honest, and trusting than that of the white settlers, Zeisberger considered the Indians his intellectual equals. He observed that they "readily grasp and understand" new concepts. He reckoned them "communicative but thoughtful" and, contradicting his earlier moral strictures, he pronounced them "modest in bearing."[192] His careful accounting and respectful treatment of American Indian customs revealed him as a loyal ally of the Native Americans he encountered. He stood by them and shared their trials throughout much of his long life.

His younger colleague John Heckewelder likewise displayed great respect for the American Indians and for the Delawares in particular. Heckewelder was born of Moravian refugee parents in Bedford, England, in 1743 and first went to the Tuscarawas River with another missionary, Christian Frederic Post, in 1762.[193] Heckewelder much admired the Indians' woodcraft, and their amazing geographical knowledge and ability to navigate through landscapes that appeared trackless to the European eye.[194] He also rejected what he called the "false picture" of the Indians as wicked savages "to whom cruelty is an appetite." He thought them generally "peaceable, sociable, obliging, charitable, and hospitable people."[195]

There are strong echoes of Jean-Jacques Rousseau's idea of the "noble savage" here and as Paul A. Wallace has shown, James Fenimore Cooper's idealized portrait of the Delawares—and his demonization of their traditional enemies, the Iroquois—draws heavily on Heckewelder's work.[196] Yet, as Wallace reminds us, Heckewelder had an inquiring mind and he brought it to bear on the "Indian's world . . . [when it] was still pretty much intact."[197] Wallace laments that it is unfortunate that much of Heckewelder's work has been neglected because in contrast with many of his contemporaries who were unable to see beyond their prejudices, his insights were intimate and unique. He recognized that the contact between the white settlers and the American Indians was a collision of conceptual universes and social systems, between a society based on private property and individualism and another based on collectivism. He observed in their social practices the notion of a "common good":

> They think that he [the Creator] made the earth and all it contains for the common good of mankind; when he stocked the country . . . it was not for the benefit of a few, but of all. Every thing [*sic*] was given in common to the sons of men.[198]

Indeed, this communist outlook was the mainspring of the Lenapes' social interaction. Many so-called "primitive" societies were communist in that there was no private property beyond personal possessions, the earth was seen as a common treasury, and social relations were cooperative.

Ohio chronicler John Bradstreet considered the Native Americans "perverse" because they steadfastly refused to imitate the whites and would not work (in the traditional European sense) "without which there can be no civilization or Christianity."[199] Heckewelder's writings about the people he lived among challenge this viewpoint and the Western idea of virtue's relation to work. For example, he observed that "They would rather lie down themselves on an empty stomach, than have it laid to their charge that they had neglected their duty, by not satisfying the wants of the stranger, the sick or the needy."[200]

In *History, Manners and Customs*, Heckewelder recounts a personal anecdote that provides further insight into the fundamental political differences between the American Indians and the settlers, in particular how

they regarded the land they inhabited. One day he noticed some tribesmen had grazed their horses in an enclosed meadow he had been preparing to mow. After attempting "to make them sensible of the injury they had done me," one tribesman explained to him:

> "My friend, it seems you lay claim to the grass my horses have eaten, because you had enclosed it with a fence: now tell me, who caused the grass to grow? Can *you* make the grass grow? I think not, and nobody can except the great Mannitto [Great Spirit] . . . the grass is common to all."[201]

The white's claim to the land was based on right of conquest and justified by the Lockean belief that the land was "empty" and ownerless until such time as someone put a fence round it, "improved" it, and claimed it as private property.

The American Indians, however, would have agreed with Rousseau, who wrote,

> The first man who, after enclosing a piece of land said, took it into his head to say, "This is mine," and found people simple enough to believe him, was the true founder of civil society. From how many crimes, how many wars, how many murders, how many misfortunes and horrors, would that man have saved the human species, who by pulling up the stakes, or filling in the ditches should have cried to his fellows: Be sure not to listen to this impostor; you are lost if you forget the fruits of the earth belong equally to all, and the earth itself to nobody.[202]

Eleanor Leacock also challenged the claim that private property was the norm among northeastern American Indian peoples in Pre-Columbian times.[203]

The Delaware people Heckewelder encountered, he tells us, once regarded the white settlers as "superior beings" owing to their talent for making things. Heckewelder informs us that they soon considered themselves mistaken. They felt the whites were,

> Ungrateful, insatiable people, who though the Indians had given them as much land as was necessary to raise provisions for themselves and their families, and pasture for their cattle, wanted still to have more, and at last would not be contented with less than the *whole* country.[204]

They also asked why "the white people are striving so much to get rich and to heap up treasures in the world which they cannot carry into the next" and were well-aware of the hypocrisy of Europeans who carried the Bible in one hand and a gun in the other.[205] The *New Testament* asks, "For what shall it profit a man, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul?"[206] The Lenape people would have agreed with this passage, but for the majority of white settlers they were just words, colliding as they did with the ideology of individualism and the market.

The Moravians' observations were echoed in a study published in 1877 by Henry Lewis Morgan. Morgan, who was "adopted" by the Seneca tribe, recorded that the Iroquois peoples "practiced communism in living" and that "all the members of an Iroquois gens were personally free." Heckewelder and Zeisberger have little to say about the political organization of Delaware society. However, it is clear from their accounts of the social egalitarianism of Lenape society that their political structures would have approximated those of other egalitarian societies of the continent's Northeast. The Iroquois federation, for example, practiced direct democracy in which every member of the gens—including women—could speak and vote. Right of recall existed, as we have seen, and could be initiated by the women. While lacking a state and written laws, their affairs were regulated by democratic assemblies in which "every adult male and female member had a voice upon all questions."[207] Not all societies in the Americas were egalitarian and democratic. Some, such as the Aztecs and Incas, were highly stratified class societies, but this was not true of the woodland peoples of the Northeast.[208]

## *Humane Treatment of the Weak*

We can gauge the humanity of a society by the way it treats children, the infirm, and the old; and also by the position women occupy within it. In this respect the American Indians of the Cuyahoga region were more enlightened than the Europeans of the time, and compare favorably with modern societies. Heckewelder rejected the European view that Native American wives were treated like slaves, although he acknowledged that they worked very hard and there was a strict sexual division of labor. However, he also recognized that Lenape marriages were not made for life, so either party could divorce any time and "women . . . [were] not obliged to live with their husbands any longer than suits their pleasure or convenience."[209] Couples married early in life, generally when the male was eighteen and the female fifteen or sixteen, but these liaisons were not expected to last. What we today would call "serial monogamy" was the rule, with more lasting relationships usually being formed later in life.[210]

In Iroquois societies, such as the Senecas and Onondagas—both of which were to be found along the Cuyahoga—women were the equal of men in the clans' democratic assemblies. A missionary informed Lewis Morgan, "The women were the greater power among the clans, as everywhere else. They did not hesitate, when occasion required, 'to knock off the horns', as it was technically called, from the head of a chief, and send him back to the ranks of the warriors." The original nomination of the chief also rested with them.[211]

This situation contrasts starkly with the prevailing norms of white society in the late eighteenth century. Divorce was not only frowned upon, it was illegal in many states of the colonies. English feminist and revolutionary Mary Wollstonecraft was castigated as a "hyena in petticoats" for advocating emancipation for women. Closer to home, the American free thinker, abolitionist, labor activist and feminist Frances Wright, labeled "the great Red Harlot of Infidelity" by her many adversaries, fought for birth control, divorce, and property rights for women.[212]

The child-rearing practices of the American Indians also stood in sharp contrast to those of the white settlers. In his writings, Zeisberger expressed disapproval of what he saw as the failure of the Native Americans to discipline their young. In this regard, he was a man of his age and culture, steeped in the repressive doctrine of "spare the rod and spoil the child." European children were regularly beaten by their parents and by others in

positions of authority. Zeisberger and Heckewelder both noted that the American Indian parents never beat their children; at most they might tip water on them if they were naughty. If the children misbehaved, they were reproved with gentle words. They were free to do as they pleased so long as they did not harm others.[213]

Heckewelder noticed that the Native American parents made much use of praise and encouragement rather than denigration. For example, a child who did something praiseworthy was told she or he was "a good child," but if the child did wrong, they would never say the *child* was bad but that the behavior was unacceptable.[214] Indian children did work, but only at the simplest and easiest of tasks, such as scaring birds away from cornfields. We may fairly contrast such attitudes with those of the French Jesuit Paul Le Jeune who complained of the "excessive love" the Montagnais "savages" had for their children, and insisted that they physically chastise them for wrongdoing.[215]

The Delaware practiced a social tolerance that far exceeded that of the settlers. For example, in the instance of mixed race liaisons—which happened with some frequency—the offspring were as much loved as other children. Similarly, physically deformed or disabled youngsters were not harmed or ostracized. "On the contrary," wrote Heckewelder, "very particular care [is] taken of such children."[216] In European society at the time, these children would be put away in asylums or even paraded in traveling freak shows.

The sense of fair play extended to mentally ill adults. In contrast with European society, which consigned its "mad" people to squalid dungeons, where they were often ill-treated and exhibited to crowds who came to jeer at the "lunatics" on Sunday outings, among the Delawares, "to laugh or scoff at them would be considered a crime," wrote Heckewelder. This applied to all people who suffered mental illness, regardless of "nation or colour."[217] The Lenape also could not bear to see the sick or the aged suffering. Heckewelder insisted that "there is no nation in the world who pay greater respect to old age than the American Indians."[218] They were taught from infancy "to be kind and attentive"[219] and he considered that they had a strong, innate sense of justice.[220]

## *Neither Yahoos nor Houyhnhnms*

The Indians were not Jonathan Swift's Yahoos; neither were they his saintly Houyhnhnms. For example, Heckewelder concedes that murder, theft, and delinquency did occur in Native American societies. The sanction for murder was usually death. For theft it was restitution of the goods with banishment and even death as possible penalties for serial offenders. (In Swift's famous satire, *Gulliver's Travels*, the Houyhnhnms were a noble and beautiful race of horses; the yahoos were filthy and uncivilized bipeds.[221])

War played a central part in Indian culture. The treatment of prisoners was often cruel. Captives could be, and often were, scalped and put to death after ritual torture. These practices naturally horrified the white settlers, who, blind to their own cruelties, adopted a superior tone in describing those of the American Indians. "The chief virtue of these poor pagans being cruelty, just as mildness is of Christians," opined Paul Le Jeune, a French Jesuit writing of the Iroquois in seventeenth-century New France (Quebec). "They teach it to their children in their very cradles and accustom them to the most atrocious carnage and the most barbarous spectacles."[222]

Unlike the Quebecois Jesuit, Heckewelder did not believe that the Native Americans were any more or less bloodthirsty than the Europeans. He insists that in practice the Delawares seldom tortured or put their captives to death "except when . . . a nation has suffered great losses in war, and it is thought necessary to revenge the death of their warriors . . . or when willful and deliberate murders have been committed by an enemy of their innocent women and children . . ."[223] A case in point was the killing of George Washington's friend Colonel William Crawford by Hopocan's men near Sandusky in 1782. Crawford's death, frightful though it was, was carried out in revenge for the massacre of defenseless Delawares at Gnadenhütten.

One is entitled to be skeptical of Heckewelder's attempt to downplay these matters. The same is true of his claim that anthropophagy was rare and only committed in extreme situations. While this may have been true for the late-eighteenth-century observer, the historical record indicates that cannibalism was practiced before then, including by the Iroquois and their Algonquian-speaking enemies.[224] As Thomas S. Abler reminds us, it is not that the Native Americans were inhumane, "but rather they were like the rest of us, all too human in their treatment of other men."[225]

Thus concludes our *tour d'horizon* of Indian life in the Akron district toward the end of the eighteenth century. There, the Lenape had found a brief sanctuary after earlier being harried and dispossessed all the way from the Atlantic shores. Other peoples too—including the Iroquois who had been their sworn enemies—had settled in the Cuyahoga Valley and lived peacefully. But the restive white settlers were a disturbing off stage presence. After the Revolution broke the power of George III, they were to pour over the Alleghenies or by boat up the Great Lakes, coveting the land they saw as rightfully theirs.

# 4

# Over the Alleghenies: An Unfolding Calamity

> America is destined for better deeds. It is our unparalleled glory that we have no reminiscences of battle fields, but in defence of humanity, of the oppressed of all nations, of the rights of conscience, the rights of personal enfranchisement. Our annals describe no scenes of horrid carnage, where men were led on by hundreds of thousands to slay one another, dupes and victims to emperors, kings, nobles, demons in the human form called heroes. We have had patriots to defend our homes, our liberties, but no aspirants to crowns or thrones; nor have the American people ever suffered themselves to be led on by wicked ambition to depopulate the land, to spread desolation far and wide, that a human being might be placed on a seat of supremacy.—JOHN L. O'SULLIVAN[226]

While it is possible that Europeans visited the Akron district from New France (Quebec) during the latter part of the seventeenth century, there is no record of any white contact with the American Indians. In 1851, a Summit County farmer called David Bacon cut down an oak tree at Northfield and observed an ancient blaze cut with a steel axe into it. Two hundred and thirty "grains" or years' growth dated the blaze to approximately 1611. Bacon concluded that it had been cut by the French, perhaps "in making a road from Detroit to Pittsburgh."[227] Detroit, however, was founded in 1701 and the French had only passed the Lachine Rapids at Montreal by 1611. Etienne Brûlé led the first French expedition up the lakes and past Niagara in 1615 but he went nowhere near the Cuyahoga River.

If Bacon's blaze does date from 1611, chances are the axe was wielded by American Indian hands and that it arrived on the Cuyahoga via what Cherry called the "great national highway of Indian tracks."[228] Many early white settlers marveled at how the Native Americans could travel long distances and unerringly arrive at their destinations. Some of these tracks had been worn down by heavy pedestrian traffic. It was the track network that made this possible. Native American trading routes crisscrossed North America and commodities were transported for thousands of miles.[229]

There is much evidence that French trappers and traders visited the Cuyahoga Valley following the defeat of the Eries in 1660. The French missionaries Dablon, Le Moine, and Chaumont may have proselytized among the Seneca people south of Lake Erie as early as 1654.[230] A number of historians claim that the celebrated French explorer René Robert La Salle followed the established Indian Cuyahoga-Tuscarawas portage path in the late 1660s or early 1670s on his way south to the Mississippi.[231] According to a Jesuit source, Senecas who visited Montreal told La Salle about the Cuyahoga, and his Shawnee guide also knew about the route.[232]

In those days the Cuyahoga River was navigable for a considerable distance for sloops. By the eighteenth century, the French had established a number of forts and trading stations south of Lake Erie. Lewis Evans's map of 1755 depicts the Cuyahoga as "muddy and pretty gentle." The portage was the best of three possible routes from Lake Erie to the Ohio River. Evans' map shows a French trading post near the portage. Its ruins were uncovered by a later settler from Connecticut.[233]

The French were to be supplanted by their British rivals after a series of wars fought at least in part over control of the vast territory lying between the Great Lakes and the Ohio River. At the same time as the French were penetrating south from Lake Erie, their British rivals were pushing into the region over the Alleghenies. One of the latter, a young man called James Smith, became the first white man known to have lived in the vicinity of the future Akron, although he did so involuntarily. In 1755, when he was eighteen years old, Smith was captured in the forest by a small group of Delaware and Conestoga Indians. For the next five years, throughout the Seven Years War (the French and Indian War), Smith lived and traveled the Ohio country as an adopted member of a Conestoga family. In 1759, at the end of the war, Smith left his Indian family and returned to his home in

Pennsylvania. He showed them no gratitude, later leading a vigilante band called the "Black Boys," who were notorious for terrorizing Native Americans.[234]

Smith's captivity partly overlapped with that of a young Irish settler, Mary Campbell, who was also kidnapped during the war. Campbell's captives were believed to be Delaware (Lenapes) and during her captivity, the girl was kept in the house of the Lenape Chief Netawatwees until her rescue by roaming frontiersmen in 1764.[235] According to local folklore, however, the Lenape first brought her to a cave near what is now Cuyahoga Falls and kept her there before moving her to their village on the southern bank of the Cuyahoga River. "Mary Campbell's Cave," as it came to be called, is still a well-known landmark.

One of the key figures in the rivalry between the French and the British was a restless Irishman called George Croghan. He remains a controversial figure and is often underestimated. After emigrating from Dublin, he set up in business in Ohio as a fur trader, shrewdly copying his French rivals who sited their premises in Native American villages. In the process, he learned both the Lenape and Seneca languages and immersed himself in Indian culture to the extent that he became a sachem of the Onondaga Council. The British appointed him Deputy Indian Agent in recognition of his influence.

In 1744, Croghan built a trading post near the mouth of the Cuyahoga River. This was a real affront to the French, who had regarded the district as theirs. During King George's War (1744–1748), French trappers put a price on his head but none were ever able to claim it.[236]

The smoldering frontier rivalries engendered by activities such as Croghan's helped ignite the Seven Years War (1756–1763), culminating a century of conflict between the kingdoms of Great Britain, France, and Spain. It was fought between the colonies of British America and New France, with both sides supported by European military units as well as Native American allies. This conflict was described by Macaulay as the only European war to have started on the American side of the Atlantic.

Ultimately, the French, who depended heavily on their indigenous allies, were soundly defeated by the British. Under the terms of the Treaty of Paris (1763), they were forced to relinquish all claims to territories east of the

Mississippi and along the St. Lawrence (a large proportion of New France) and cede them to the British.

Croghan lost his influence as a result of a false accusation of treason against the American Revolution, but his role in "opening up" the frontier had paved the way for others to follow. Even at the end of the wars with France, a group of Virginians and Marylanders formed the Ohio Company with a view to developing colonial ventures in what were then known as the Northwestern Territories.[237] By the mid-1700s, a huge pressure of British colonists was building up on the Allegheny frontier.

The biggest losers in the Seven Years War were the American Indians. White contact from Columbus onwards has been described as "a horror story, not an epic," and the pattern continued across the double continent. David S. Jones, a Harvard scholar whose early academic work focused on epidemics among Native American people, informs us "the decimation of the American Indian populations that followed European arrival in the Americas was one of the most shocking demographic events of the last millennium."[238] The colonial chronicler John Bradstreet describes a slippery slope on which the American Indians were "crowded out" by the white settlers: food would run short and disease would spread and the ensuing "frightful mortality" was worsened by "the vices they acquire from the whites."[239] With pious hypocrisy, the white settlers saw the catastrophe as "God's will" in "sweeping away great multitudes of the natives . . . that He might make room for us there."[240]

Heckewelder observed of the American Indians he lived among that those "who have not adopted the vices of the white people live to a good age, from 70 to 90."[241] Zeisberger, on the other hand, claimed that the Native Americans were more prone to succumb to diseases than the white settlers, attributing this to their "rough manner of life and the hardships of travel and the chase."[242] Among their ailments, Heckewelder lists the following: "pulmonary consumptions, fluxes, fevers . . . [and] bilious fevers," which he attributed to living near marshes and stagnant ponds. He also mentions an affliction he calls "yellow vomit"—possibly hepatitis—which he said could be fatal and claimed that "great numbers" of children died from worm infestations.[243]

Many American Indians were infected with syphilis by the time the Moravian missionaries arrived in the region. Zeisberger declared this was

"doubtless due to their disorderly life,"[244] and most Europeans believed that the disease originated in the Americas. Heckewelder disagreed with his superior, endorsing instead "the uniform assertion of our Northern Indians that this contagion was first introduced among them by emigrants from Europe." He appears to have been correct. European diseases were even transmitted via intermediaries to American Indians who had never come into contact with settlers.[245]

The second disease the colonists brought with them was alcoholism. Apparently unknown among the eastern North American peoples until the arrival of the whites, alcoholic liquor was to have catastrophic consequences for Native American society. As Heckewelder put it, "our vices have destroyed them more than our swords."[246] Strong spirits such as whiskey were the norm on the frontier, being more intoxicating, cheaper to transport, and more profitable for merchants than beer and wine. The results, Heckewelder observed, included drunken brawls, murder, revenge attacks, and even war. The Native Americans claimed that white traders encouraged them to drink to excess. Drunken Indians could be more easily defrauded of land and commodities, particularly as many spoke poor English or none at all and could not read documents set before them. The attitude of the British commander at Detroit must have been commonplace on the frontier. He gloated that "the unrestricted sale of rum among the Indians would extirpate them more quickly than powder and shot, and at less cost."[247]

In 1802, the first distillery was built in Hudson Township[248] and the local American Indians soon began haunting the distillery's doors begging for liquor. When the Wetmore family settled at Silver Lake in 1804, one of their first acts—at the request of the U.S. government—was to build a whiskey still. Customers included the nearby Senecas, 500 of whom lived in two villages near the lakeshore.

The effects of the distilleries' wares were soon felt. Lucius Bierce observed that Native Americans who were friendly and peaceable when sober often became surly and unpredictable when under the influence of whiskey. One of these was a Native American the whites called Willson, who was said to be "notorious" for his drunken misbehavior. Willson resided at Northampton Township in Summit County, bordering Akron and Cuyahoga Falls. According to Bierce's account, Willson was "constantly

hanging round the distillery," where he had a "boasting and threatening" presence. His life was brief, for he was shot dead by inveterate Indian hater Jonathan Williams.[249] Williams escaped punishment and went on to murder other Indians with impunity. In another case, some drunken Indian youths terrorized some women at the Oviatt home in Hudson, causing their father, Pontecacawaugh, to despair.[250]

There are many other documented occurrences of Native American drunkards hallucinating, seeing snakes, and biting off people's noses. A Delaware dubbed Cornelius Rosenbaum by German settlers in Summit County killed his best friend when intoxicated. Sick to his soul, he afterwards always referred to drink as "the Devil's blood" and refused to touch it.[251] The last act of the Ottawa man, O'Mic, who was publicly hanged in Cleveland's Public Square in 1812 before a crowd of jeering white settlers, was to gulp down a pint of whiskey on the scaffold.[252]

The Ottawa chief Ogontz, who lived near Hudson and had studied for the Christian priesthood, was another tragic victim of alcoholism. He slew another tribesman in self-defense when the man attacked him in a drunken rage. Chief Ogontz was acquitted of murder and adopted the man's son, only to be later shot dead by him in revenge.[253] The Seneca chief Stigwanish, who lived near what became Boston Township, was another whose life was blighted by alcohol. One day, when blind drunk, he threw an axe at his wife. He missed his target but the blade killed their baby whom she was carrying on her back.[254]

Heckewelder observed that many of the American Indians he lived among were "very sensible of the state of degradation to which they have been brought . . . and whenever they speak of it, never fail to reproach the whites, for having enticed them into that vicious habit."[255] For example, abstinence figured prominently in the message of local Native American revivalist preachers such as Neolin. According to Cherry, the Delaware warrior Hopocan did not drink whiskey. He admitted that he loved it but refused to drink because it would set a bad example for his people.[256] Heavy drinking continued regardless of such efforts.

Yet, as Jones reminds us, *we should be wary of attributing the calamity that befell Indian society solely to alcohol and disease*.[257] While the Native Americans had never known drink before the arrival of the whites, and had no resistance to the new diseases, the adoption of European vices did not

occur in a social vacuum. The severity and incidence of disease were exacerbated by the white settlers' aggressive expansion. Loss of land, culture, self-respect and zest for life, combined with malnutrition and general privation, lowered the Indians' resistance. In a vicious cycle, alcohol provided solace for the sorrows of life but drinkers paid a heavy price for it in the destruction of their physical and psychological health. This in turn impacted on those around them, even if they were teetotal.

## *Gathering Resistance via a Pan-Indian Consciousness*

The Indian tribes of the Ohio Valley were surprised and angered by the defeat of their French allies in the Seven Years War. During their association with the French, the local tribes were still in possession of their homelands. In fact, many tribes enjoyed a relatively harmonious coexistence and intermingling with the French settlers that stood in direct contrast with their oftentimes violent and exploitative relationship with the English settlers. However, as Leacock and Wolf have argued, the French fur trade made the American Indians dependent on European commodities, drew them into the orbit of the market, impacted adversely on the environment, and led to cultural assimilation and decay.[258] The Moravian missionaries found that the Indians had adopted many aspects of the whites' material culture. Their houses were hybrid "cabinlike structures" that had evolved from their original wigwams and their dress was "a potpourri of trade cloth and deerskins."[259]

After the war, when the Ohio Valley tribes learned they were expected to turn their loyalty from New France to a new European monarch, King George III of England, they were outraged. Tensions were further heightened when, in early 1763, King George III's appointed commanding general of British forces in North America, Lord Jeffrey Amherst, announced he would discontinue the practice of presenting annual gifts to the tribes, a practice long honored by the French settlers. The natives were insulted by this snub, but also were angry to be denied the expected tools, blankets, guns, and liquor. Local tribes banded together to form resistance to the British settlers.

Relations between the local tribes had not always been harmonious—the Delawares and Iroquois had long been at war—but their common plight

created what the historian Francis Cogliano has called "polyglot Native American communities" west of the Alleghenies.[260] Noted American Indian scholar Gregory Evans Dowd informs us, "South of Lake Erie lay a land of promise, and many Indian peoples gathered peacefully on it." These peoples included Shawnees, Mingos, Senecas, and Wyandots, with smaller numbers of Kahnawakes and Abenakis, in addition to the Delawares and other Algonquians.[261]

Around 1762—the exact date is unclear—the Delaware nativist revival preacher Neolin ("the Enlightened One" in the eastern Algonquian dialect) arrived in the Cuyahoga Valley with a message partly derived from the scriptures but rooted in indigenous traditions. There is debate among historians about the relative importance of Christianity in Neolin's message, but Neolin urged the Cuyahoga Indians to go back to the old ways of living "in the situation in which Mannitto [the Great Spirit] had originally placed them."[262] Neolin was already an established medicine man and "dreamer" or *Pawatapi* when he had a vision of the way to lead his people out of danger.[263] He warned the local people of the danger represented by the English settlers massing across the mountains, with their guns, poxes, land-hunger, and alcohol. "The Indian's lot had been much happier before the arrival of the European," he lamented, "and would once again improve if, by some means or another, the Indian could again live without the white man."[264]

Neolin's message contained both a strong anti-colonial sentiment and pan-Indian subscript that was absorbed by the great Ottawa war chief Pontiac and his allies.[265] When Pontiac led an alliance of Great Lakes Indian peoples into rebellion against the British colonists in May 1763, the uprising raged the fiercest in areas that had been most receptive to Neolin's teachings.[266] Pontiac's War, as it is known to historians, exploded across a huge tract of the Northwest that the British had seized from France during the French and Indian War, which itself had lasted from 1754 until 1763. Indians from many local tribes including the Ottawa, Ojibwa, Shawnee, Delaware, Miami, Huron, Seneca, and Potawatomi formed an alliance to fight the British.[267] Their motivation was summed up by Nimwha, a Shawnee plenipotentiary, in negotiations with the British Indian agent George Croghan: "You think yourselves Masters of the Country, because you have taken it from the French, who, as you know, had no Right to it, as

it is the property of us Indians."[268] The war cost thousands of casualties and ended only after negotiations guaranteed changes to British policies.

One of Pontiac's leading allies was the Delaware warrior chieftain Konieschquanoheel, which translates as "Maker of Daylight." Born c.1729 in western Pennsylvania, he was in his mid-thirties when the alliance was formed. More widely known as Hopocan or Captain Pipe to the white settlers, Konieschquanoheel lived at the Portage Lakes on the southern outskirts of today's Akron.[269] It is very likely that the two leaders knew each other personally before the outbreak of war, as Pontiac had lived in the Cuyahoga Valley during the 1750s, although he was born near the western end of Lake Erie. The prophet Neolin's message must have fallen on receptive ears in the Cuyahoga Valley, for the Native American communities there were suspicious of the white settlers even before his arrival. The Munsee, Wyandot, Seneca-Cayuga, and Lenape (Delaware) staged particularly intense raids on British settlements in the Ohio country and in western Pennsylvania during 1763.

Another prophet who was active during this period was Wangomend, of the Monsey branch of the Delawares. Wangomend famously told the Moravian missionaries that there were three heavens: one for the Indians, one for the Negroes, and another for the white people.[270] In Wangomend's vision, the colonial racial hierarchy was turned upside down, with God favoring people of color. Whites were consigned to hell in the afterlife because of the hell on earth they had inflicted on the Negroes and Indians. The heaven of the Indians was:

> the happiest of the three, and that of the whites the unhappiest; for they were under chastisement for their ill treatment of the Indians, and for possessing themselves of the land which God had given them. They were also punished for making beasts of the Negroes, by selling them as the Indians do their horses and dogs, and beating them unmercifully, although God had created them as well as the rest of mankind.[271]

The idea of three heavens gained widespread currency among the Indian populations, whose common experience of loss following the Seven Years

War, and their frequent violent clashes with the British settlers, hastened the development of a pan-Indian consciousness.

## *The Proclamation Line*

The Indians obtained an unlikely ally at this stage. On October 7, 1763, King George III issued a Royal Proclamation restricting white settlement west of the Appalachian Mountains and reserving the ceded lands for the Native Americans. The British colonists were denied any jurisdiction over the vast territories beyond the "Proclamation Line"; these were declared to be under the immediate domination of the Crown. White settlement was only permitted by the "special leave or license" of the king. There was considerable ambiguity in the wording of the proclamation. On the one hand, the Indians were not classified as British subjects, but were regarded as being under the king's protection. However, the proclamation denied native sovereignty and did not confirm rights and liberties for the Indian peoples.[272]

Ambiguous or not, the colonists resented the impediment to expansion. For them, the former French lands were spoils of war. For the king to deny them access flew in the face of what was later known as the doctrine of Manifest Destiny. Although apparently first expressed by the journalist John L. O'Sullivan in 1845, the idea that it was the white settlers' "manifest destiny to overspread the continent allotted by Providence for the free development of . . . [their] yearly multiplying millions"[273] was already deeply ingrained. For the Cuyahoga this meant the self-evident fact that "God's chosen people" were called to push back the "children of nature towards the glowing west."[274]

To the colonists, George III was an arrogant and distant monarch who refused to allow the settlers to put the land "to any civilized use."[275] Instead, he protected savages who wasted fruitful soil, and whose agricultural methods were "but little superior to those of the buffalo, the bear and the wolf."[276] Another writer saw the natives as "hyenas of the forest" and argued that their lands could be taken by force or sold on the basis of arcane principles of English law.[277] Thus, it was indeed inevitable that the colonies could not be confined east of the Alleghenies. The settlers

believed that George III was unfit to possess or act as custodian of the Ohio lands, and the 1763 proclamation lit the fuse of the coming American Revolutionary War in which Ohio would be a center of hostilities. The war would bring only more pain for the American Indians.

## *The Aftermath of Pontiac's Uprising*

In the years between King George's War and the American Revolutionary War (1775–1783), intermittent warfare broke out across the Alleghenies. The spark for the conflicts was a West Virginia pogrom committed by the so-called Paxton Boys. In December 1763, a mob of drunken settlers came "equipped for murder" and killed and mutilated six peaceful Indians from a Conestoga village.[278] Fourteen Conestogas managed to escape and fled to nearby Lancaster, Pennsylvania. The local sheriff took the Conestogas into protective custody, but the Paxton Boys broke into the jail and lynched them. The Indians were outraged when the murderers were granted free pardons and the authorities promised to improve security against hostile Indians on the frontier.[279]

In 1774, a band of "white Indian haters" massacred the family of the Cayuga (or Mingo) sachem Logan—or Tah-gah-jute—who lived near Steubenville on the Ohio River. The murderers first stupefied their victims with alcohol in Baker's Tavern and then slew them in cold blood. The victims included Logan's heavily-pregnant sister. Although Logan blamed Colonel Cresap for the atrocity in his famous "Lament," Cresap had left a man named Daniel Greathouse in charge.[280] It was a brutal and cowardly act; all the more so because Logan had been friendly toward the whites and was an advocate for peace. Indeed, he had been baptized by the Moravians.[281] As he said in his "Lament": "I appeal to any white man to say, if ever he entered Logan's cabin hungry, and he gave him not meat; if ever he came cold and naked, and he clothed him. During the course of the last long and bloody war, Logan remained idle in his cabin, an advocate for peace . . ."[282] Driven beyond endurance, Logan moved to where Bath Township is today, overlooking the Cuyahoga, and launched a campaign of revenge.[283] Known as Dunmore's War after the royal governor of Virginia,

hostilities ended after negotiations. Logan then disappeared from the historical stage.

The settlers' hostility towards the Indians was shared by many British army officers. Principal among these was the King's commander-in-chief, Lord Jeffrey Amherst, who stated that the Native Americans were "only fit to live with the inhabitants of the woods, being more nearly allied to the Brute than to Human creation." Amherst is best remembered for advocating the spread of smallpox among Native Americans via infected blankets, impractical as it may have been. He also approved any other method that might "extirpate this Execrable Race."[284] Amherst moved in the very highest circles of the British establishment, so it is little wonder that the settlers were able to act with impunity against the "Vermine," as Amherst's subordinate Colonel Bouquet called them. Settlers poured over the Proclamation Line and by the beginning of the 1770s there were over 10,000 British colonials in the Ohio Valley alone.[285] Within two decades, the settlers would be on the Cuyahoga frontier.

## *The Myth of the American Revolutionary War*

The notion that the American Revolutionary War was fought solely for liberty is one that dominates the historical record. One of the lesser known reasons why the colonists rose up against the British Crown is because during a period of aggressive pioneering, the British Crown tried to curb the settlers' dispossession of the land and liberty of the Native American peoples. The Ohio historian E. O. Randall, President Theodore Roosevelt, and other defenders of the doctrine of Manifest Destiny are quite open about this motivation.[286] For them, the dispossession was inevitable and necessary as part of the American national impulse that would civilize the wild frontier.

In 1775, war broke out between British military forces and colonial militias on the eastern seaboard. This impelled the colonists to issue their formal declaration of independence from the British Crown in 1776. Although their grievances as set out in the Declaration were not of direct concern to the Indians, it would prove difficult for the latter to stand aloof from this internecine white squabble. During the long war that followed, the Indians distrusted the British and the American forces in equal measure; the

Delawares joked that the British and Americans were like a pair of scissors —they only cut that which comes between them, i.e., the Indians.[287]

Generations of American schoolchildren and admirers of liberty around the world know the ringing lines of the second paragraph of the Declaration of Independence by heart: "We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain inalienable rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness." Fewer, however, are aware of the later passage that accuses George III of having "excited domestic insurrections among us"—a reference to African slave unrest—and of endeavoring "*to bring on the inhabitants of our frontiers, the merciless Indian Savages, whose known rule of warfare, is an undistinguished destruction of all ages, sexes and conditions*" (emphasis added). As Francis Cogliano notes, "by juxtaposing the claim to universal equality with accusations of African and Native American treachery and savagery, Jefferson suggested that these groups were not entitled to the rights and liberties enshrined in the Declaration . . ."[288]

On the eastern seaboard, some tribes such as the Passamaquoddy, Penobscot, and Micmac peoples of eastern Maine and Nova Scotia allied themselves with the rebels, calculating that the British would be defeated in these relatively thickly settled regions.[289] For the American Indian peoples transplanted beyond the Alleghenies it was a different matter. The British presented no immediate threat to the Indians' interests there and while it was true that the British soldiers had helped to crush the Pontiac uprising, and Jeffrey Amherst had been a savage foe, they must still have seemed the blunter of the scissors' blades. For their part, the British were outnumbered by rebels and anxious to secure the support of the Indians. They could muster only 500 troops in all of the vast former French territories—territories they wished to maintain regardless of the outcome of the Revolutionary War. While it was doubtful that the British would honor their promises that Ohio was Indian land in the long term, "circumstances compelled most Indians to pursue policies of neutrality or to fight alongside the British," argues Cogliano, because one of the central aims of the rebels was the right to "unfettered white expansionism."[290]

On the other hand, while there was no guarantee that the British would prevail, an American victory would most certainly mean the dispossession

of the Ohio Indians. Their actions proved it to be so, as the Lenape sachem Konieschquanoheel—or Hopocan—was to learn. Initially attempting to remain neutral, Hopocan became increasingly hostile to the revolutionaries. Hopocan had played a leading role in the Pontiac Revolt and this, perhaps, had wearied him of killing. Even after his mother, his brother, and some of his children were killed by American soldiers commanded by General Edward Hand, Hopocan tried to stay out of the conflict. The Americans, however, saw his temperance as weakness, and threatened the annihilation of the Lenape people if he did not agree to support their side against the British. The bullying was too much to bear, and Hopocan reluctantly decided to ally his people with the British.[291] For the insurrectionary settlers, on the other hand, the tilt of the Indians toward the British was further evidence of the perfidy of the "merciless Indian Savages." At the conclusion of the war, the United States signed a treaty with the Lenape, but it proved worthless. In 1794, Hopocan died far from his ancestral lands, either in Indiana or Canada.[292]

## *Wars for the West*

In the final years of the American Revolutionary War, hostilities raged west of the Alleghenies. British military forces still had a firm foothold in Canada and were determined to maintain their grip on as much of the continent as possible. Even after General Cornwallis's surrender in 1781, the British soldiers kept up a "terrible harrying of the American border"[293] from their redoubt at Detroit, and maintained footholds at Sandusky on the southern shore of Lake Erie and on the southern bank of the Niagara River.

Battles were fought with great savagery on both sides. The British commander at Detroit, Henry Hamilton, was dubbed the "Hair-buyer General" because he paid native warriors a bounty for the scalps of American settlers.[294] One of the most successful American commanders, twenty-five-year-old George Rogers Clark, is remembered for his blood-chilling boast that "he would never spare Man, woman or child of them [the Indians] on whom he could lay his hands."[295]

The American Revolutionary War officially ended with the surrender of British General Cornwallis at Yorktown, Virginia, on October 19, 1781, but

the killing and dispossession of the American Indians west of the Alleghenies continued. On March 8, 1792, a contingent of colonial American militia—"dastardly cowards," Lucius Bierce insists—under the command of Colonel David Williamson from Pennsylvania, attacked the Moravian settlement at Gnadenhütten on the Tuscarawas River in Ohio.[296]

During this attack, ninety-six Christian Delaware Indians were slaughtered with axes and mallets, over two-thirds of them women and children.[297] As historian M. M. Quaife points out, "[h]umanity aside, the treatment which the Americans accorded the Moravians was incredibly stupid, since it further infuriated the Ohio savages and imbued them with the conviction that they had only extermination to expect at the hands of the Americans."[298] For his part, the chieftain Hopocan exacted terrible revenge for the Gnadenhütten massacre. In June 1792, William Crawford, a subordinate of David Williamson, the perpetrator of the massacre, was captured by Hopocan and condemned to death by torture at the stake by an assembly of American Indian women.[299]

The following year, the Treaty of Paris officially halted all hostilities between the Americans and the British and the Northwestern Indians were left to their own devices. It is unlikely that any of them had much faith in the Redcoats, but they had little choice but to join them against a more rapacious foe. Hopocan, for his part, had bluntly told them so. "Think not that I want sense to convince me," he said, "that although you now pretend to keep up a perpetual enmity to the long knives [i.e. the revolutionaries], you may, before long, conclude a peace with them."[300] That peace, when it came, made no provision for the security of the American Indians and left their lands open to confiscation by right of conquest.

## *The Western Reserve and White Man's Law*

Two years before the massacre at the Moravian missionary village of Gnadenhütten, the U.S. Congress had arbitrated a conflict between Connecticut and Pennsylvania over ownership of the Allegheny region. Although Pennsylvania gained the most territory, Connecticut was awarded three and a half million acres of land south of Lake Erie, including the

present day sites of Cleveland and Akron as compensation. This marks the region's becoming known as the Western Reserve or New Connecticut.[301]

In 1786, Connecticut formally waived any claim to other lands west of the mountains. Most of the Reserve was in turn purchased for $1.2 million by the Connecticut Land Company in 1795. Shortly afterwards, General Moses Cleaveland landed on the Lake Erie shore at the site of the city that now bears his name. The company began sales of parcels of land to an influx of settlers from Connecticut, most of them of old Puritan New England stock.[302]

During this period Cleaveland assured Indian representatives that "they should not be disturbed in their possessions, [and] we would treat them, & their friends, as brothers."[303] This promise, however, would prove hollow. While the Indian tribes clearly had prior occupancy of the Western Reserve lands, the American authorities argued that under the terms of the Treaty of Paris the British had waived all claims to the territories and had ceded the lands of their Indian allies to the new republic.

The fact that the Indians had not been consulted and were not represented at the treaty negotiations was never taken into consideration. As Reginald Horsman has argued, what began as a "naked desire for land" was by 1812 "transmuted into lofty moral purpose," with the colonists convincing themselves that their purpose was in the ultimate best interests of the Indians. They told the Indians that they should be grateful that they were not expelled to Canada as former allies of the defeated British.[304]

## *Pen-and-Ink Witchcraft*

After the Treaty of Paris, three treaties were drawn up to demarcate the remaining Indian lands from American territory. The first, the Treaty of Fort Stanwix, was finalized between the United States and Native Americans from the six nations of the Iroquois League on October 22, 1784. This treaty was to remedy the exemption of the status of Indian lands in the Treaty of Paris. It was intended as a peace treaty between the Americans and the Iroquois, as well as other Indian populations residing further west.

The second treaty was signed at Fort McIntosh, Pennsylvania, in January 1785 by representatives of the American government and the Wyandots,

Delawares, Ottawas, and Chippewas. This defined Ohio, and in particular the Cuyahoga and the Portage Path, as the westernmost boundary of the United States.[305] According to the local historian C. R. Quine, the treaty clearly forbade white settlement on large parts of land that make up today's Akron.[306]

The last of the three treaties was signed at Fort Finney (near present-day Cincinnati) in 1786, and followed a period of mounting discontent among Native American tribes over the ongoing violation of the treaty lines by white settlers. As Ottawa war leader Egushawa noted, they were "pen-and-ink witchcraft" designed to deceive: what was written was not what was said.[307]

The U.S. government—not to mention the waves of settlers who were creating "facts on the ground" in what became the time-honored fashion of colonialism—maintained that the Indians could be prevailed upon to sell or otherwise relinquish the lands allotted to them. In a letter written in 1783 to the U.S. Congress, General Philip Schuyler refined this argument. The Indians' primary imperative, he believed, would be survival. The encroaching settlements and farms would deplete the Indians' game supplies and the former inhabitants would either die out or move west, leaving the country in the settlers' possession "without the expence [*sic*] of a purchase, trifling as that will probably be."[308]

Back east in the nation's capital, George Washington and Thomas Jefferson advocated a softer approach. America's Manifest Destiny was to spread westward, but the Indians should be assimilated into the nation's social and economic life by accepting European doctrines of landownership and learning European methods of farming the land.[309] This assimilationist doctrine might have been sincere, but it in any case carried little weight over the Alleghenies where dispossession of Indian lands continued apace.

## *Fallen Timbers: Deathblow to the Indian Cause*

With their drafting of the Treaty of Paris, the British had left the Indians in the lurch by failing to address the status of their lands, but they had never abandoned hope of regaining the former French territories south of the Great Lakes. In 1789, the Indians turned to their old allies, the British

Redcoats, for support in what would become a five-year war to maintain their land.

At stake was a vast region bordered to the north by Lake Erie, to the west and south by the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers, and to the east by a line running south from the Cuyahoga River to the southernmost boundaries of today's Ohio. The American settlers' supremacy was won by the defeat of the Wyandot, Delaware, Shawnee, Miami, and Ottawa warriors and their British allies at the Battle of Fallen Timbers. There, on August 20, 1794, near the site of today's Toledo, General "Mad" Anthony Wayne's forces crushed their foes.[310]

Cogliano states that the battle "represents the proper end of the wars of the American Revolution."[311] Horsman considers it to have been "a deathblow to England's chances of establishing an Indian preserve northwest of the Ohio."[312] General Wayne's battlefield gains were consolidated by the Treaty of Greenville in 1795, which secured American control over the territories theoretically ceded by the British at the Treaty of Paris over a decade earlier. At Greenville, the representatives of eleven Ohio tribes relinquished their claims to all of Ohio save for the northwest corner, west of the Cuyahoga River, which was made a reservation. By 1800, there were 45,000 settlers between the Ohio River and Lake Erie. By the time Ohio was admitted as a state on March 1, 1803, Indians lived outside of the reservation only on the sufferance of the white settlers.[313]

# 5

# The Embers of an Almost Extinguished Race

> I am one of the embers of an almost extinguished race. My grave will soon be my habitation . . . My people are like the scattered stalks that remain in the field when the tempest has passed over it . . . the red man must starve or leave the graves of his fathers, and make a bed with the setting sun.—INDIAN CHIEF, RICHFIELD, SUMMIT COUNTY[314]

The flood of settlers impacted on the American Indian peoples living in what was to become Summit County. The fate of the Senecas is typical. In 1802, seven years after the Land Company's Moses Cleaveland landed near the mouth of the Cuyahoga, a white settler named William Walker squatted on land at Silver Lake in today's Stow on the northern outskirts of Akron. Two years later, Joseph Darrow—whose name is commemorated in a road in that district—came to survey the district with a view to parceling out the land and establishing a permanent settlement there.[315]

At the time, some 500 Seneca Indians lived in an encampment on a ridge at the southern end of the lake. In the first years, relations between the Senecas and the new arrivals were cordial enough. Indeed, the early settlers often could not have survived without the Indians' help. In one incident, Judge William Wetmore took sick with "fever and ague" and only avoided death thanks to the ministrations of the Senecas' medicine man. He later recalled that if the Indians had not helped his family out with meat, "they would have starved during that first winter." Joined by his brother Titus, Wetmore grew turnips, cucumbers, cabbages and wheat, which he traded for fresh meat from the Indians. Wagmong, the local Seneca sachem,

frequently visited the family on business and many years later, when he was a nonagenarian living at Cuyahoga Falls, Wetmore's son Henry remembered playing with the Indian children in their village near the lake. Wagmong was particularly taken with Henry's young sister, then a two-year-old, and took her reverently in his arms to display to his people.[316]

Christian Cackler arrived in Hudson Township in Summit County as a small child with his parents in 1804. He recalled many years later that although the local Indians, who included members of the Seneca, Taway, and Chippeway peoples, outnumbered the whites by a margin of 40 to 1, "they were very friendly and peaceable." The chief of the Senecas, John Bigson, was a man just short of six feet in height, with a stout and muscular build, "keen black eyes," and a stern demeanor. "He scarcely ever smiled," adds Cackler, "and I think he was perfectly honest, and what he said, he meant." Cackler also remembered the Taway chief Stignish (possibly Stigwanish) as pleasant and sincere. The Indians were invariably generous according to this testimony, and thought it a privilege to give food to their white guests as a token of friendship.[317]

Such generosity was often taken for granted but in return great cruelty, inflicted on the Indians by frontier ne'er-do-wells, all too often with impunity. In the harsh winter of 1806, Chief Bigson got into an altercation with some white horse traders at Deerfield in Portage County. During the fracas, a man called Daniel Diver was shot dead by an Indian called John Mohawk. A party of militia commanded by Major Ryers gave chase and trapped Bigson and some followers on the banks of the Cuyahoga near Boston. They shot an Indian called Nicksaw dead and arrested Bigson and his son. "It was in the depth of winter," Lucius Bierce relates, "and the Indians were taken back, bound and not even allowed the covering that would have made a brute comfortable." As a result, they were "frozen so that they were crippled for life." They were even denied moccasins for their feet in the bitter cold and snow. Bigson and his son were tried and acquitted, but with crippled feet, they could no longer hunt. Bigson's wife, who had fled into the forest from the militia, had perished in the snow. The chief had always been friendly toward the whites and had even served under General Anthony Wayne in the frontier wars. Bierce concludes tersely: "Such was the gratitude—such the reward bestowed by the whites."[318]

Most likely whiskey helped fuel rising tensions between Indians and settlers in the region, for both peoples were fond of it. Cackler recalled that the Indians at Hudson loved it and would often get drunk. But while there can be little doubt that alcohol helped erode the social fabric of Indian society, the underlying factor behind rising tensions was the question of white settlement on Indian lands. While the Indians at Silver Lake and Hudson were happy to extend courtesy to small numbers of white men, the loss of land to the growing influx of settlers was cause for grave concern. The idea of private property in land was alien to the Indian way of thinking. For their part, the settlers were in no doubt as to the legitimacy of their claims to the land. Conspiracy theories attributed growing Indian dissatisfaction to the machinations of British agents. David Hudson, who in 1799 founded the Cuyahoga Valley town that bears his name, regarded the local tribesmen as "criminals working in concert with disreputable whites."[319]

White scoundrels were not in short supply on the frontier. Two such were McMahon and Story, brutal miscreants for whom killing an Indian was little different than taking the life of an animal. In 1800, they killed two Indians named Spotted Dick and Captain George. McMahon was tried and acquitted of murder by a white jury, but Story fled to avoid trial. Enraged, the murdered men's friend, Onondaga George, slaughtered a number of whites in retaliation and was only prevented from worse mayhem by the intervention of another Indian chief. Onondaga George was demonized as a lunatic killer as a result of his retaliatory rampage and later joined the insurgent Indian bands in the War of 1812, after which he disappeared.[320] His rocky redoubt overlooking the Cuyahoga is still known today as Onondaga George's Lookout.

## *The Final Dispossession in Summit County*

In 1805, eleven years after Fallen Timbers, the Ohio Indians began a course that would again bring them into violent conflict with the American republic. Their leaders this time were two Shawnee brothers: a chieftain called Tecumseh and a thirty-one-year-old former alcoholic called Lalawethika, who in a vision of freedom as he lay in a drunken stupor changed his name to Tenskwatawa ("Open Door") and renounced liquor.

Valiant though their struggle was, it was doomed to fail and would be followed by dispossession and removal further west.

Tecumseh was a great orator, and was acknowledged by his archenemy, President William Henry Harrison, as "one of those uncommon geniuses which spring up occasionally to produce revolutions and overturn the established order of things." Harrison believed that but for the existence of white society, Tecumseh could have built a great empire, but his interests really lay in the liberation of his own Shawnee people and American Indians as a whole, whom he urged to unite for common defense against the white settlers.[321] According to reports from white settlers, Tecumseh was a generous man who insisted on the humane treatment of captives.[322] He was, nevertheless, a great warrior.

To the white settlers, his brother Tenskwatawa was known as the "Shawnee Prophet" or more simply "the Prophet." He preached a doctrine similar to that of the Delaware Neolin: the Indians must cease fighting among themselves, reject the white man's idea of private property in land, and return to the old ways. In 1808, the brothers moved from Ohio and founded a new settlement known as Prophetstown or Tippecanoe, in Indiana, and used it as a base for a pan-Indian resistance against the encroaching settlers.

During the period 1808–1811, the militancy of Tenskwatawa's sermons grew increasingly worrisome to the white settlers, particularly as more and more warriors from nearby tribes joined his movement. On November 7, 1811, General William Henry Harrison led a contingency of American forces that surrounded the settlement. The event, known as the Battle of Tippecanoe, was a two-hour conflict that culminated in the destruction of the village and put an end to Tecumseh's hope of a broad Native alliance. It also signaled the eruption of the War of 1812, which again pitted the American republic against the British and their Indian allies.[323]

Among those who joined Tecumseh's revolt were the Seneca people at Silver Lake. According to William Lodge, "they all left in a single night and joined Tecumseh at the west end of Lake Erie." Judge Wetmore witnessed what he referred to as a "huddle" in the Seneca village, attended by a British spy who alleged that the Americans planned to dispossess the Indians and promised that if the Indians supported the Crown, they would have their lands returned to them. Lodge claims that the agent also asked

Seneca chief Wagmong to massacre the whites at Silver Lake, but the chief declined the invitation. When dawn broke after the Wetmores had kept an armed vigil throughout the night the Senecas had departed, "taking their dogs with them."[324]

Although a small number briefly returned after the end of the war, most perished in the battles of the Maumee Valley and the Thames in Canada east of Detroit.[325] The battle on the Thames during autumn 1813 marked the definitive end of Indian resistance in the old Northwest. Tecumseh perished on the field along with a number of his warriors after the British had abandoned them. Afterwards, in a fit of spite akin to the massacre at Gnadenhütten, General Harrison's forces destroyed Moraviatown, a nearby settlement of peaceful Christian Indians who had played no part in the conflict.[326]

The War of 1812 marked the start of unimpeded white settlement in Summit County. As Cogliano argues, "[t]he biggest losers in the American Revolution were not the British, whose empire thrived after the loss of America, but the first Americans."[327] This was especially the case in Ohio. The Ohio settlers felt confident of holding on to their newly acquired lands and "what was equally important [the war] . . . cleared the country of Indians."[328] Neither the British nor the Americans emerged from this period with clean hands. As Reginald Horsman put it:

> To the British and American governments, however lofty their public statements, the Indians were little more than pawns. Britain hoped to use them to retain strategic control over the land south of the Great Lakes or to defend Canada; America looked upon them as obstacles in the path of civilization. To both governments they were undoubtedly expendable.[329]

The remaining Indians received short shrift after the end of hostilities and this was certainly true of the Akron district.

When two American officers, Captain Delawn Mills and Captain Edwards, learned that a group of Indians was camped on the banks of the Cuyahoga, they attacked with a party of "Indian fighters" and killed five of the hapless tribesmen. A sixth managed to escape by vaulting over a

twelve-foot chasm but was tracked through the snow to Cleveland and shot dead. According to Emily Nash, who knew the man who unearthed the Indians' corpses a few years later, they were killed for siding with the British. It was murder all the same, and a cowardly ambush against a numerically inferior foe. Nash claims that the Indians had menaced settlers and demanded whiskey, but she does admit that they were resentful of the expropriation of their land. Desultory talk of prosecuting Mills and Edwards for murder came to nothing.[330]

Such incidents must have convinced the remaining Indians that there was no future for them in the Reserve. This was certainly true of the natives of the Akron region. Some of the remaining Senecas from Silver Lake were allotted land on a reservation at Wolf River in faraway Wisconsin.[331] The Lenape were "scattered throughout Oklahoma, Texas and Canada" and the Ottawas and Chippewas were relocated to reservations in Michigan and Wisconsin.[332] The Lenape could trace their misfortunes back to 1614, when the Dutch came ashore on Lenape land on faraway Manhattan Island. Although the Lenape joked about that fateful contact—Manhattan is a corruption of *Manahachtanienk*, "the island where we all became intoxicated"[333]—the gag softened a terrible pain.

Charles Whittlesey, writing in 1842, was coy about the fate of the Indians of Tallmadge. While conceding that the relations between the settlers and the local Delawares were generally good, he claimed that the more "inefficient" local Indians "were soon removed to more central parts of the state [Ohio] for safety" soon after 1812.[334] The last of the few remaining Indians at Richfield, northwest of Cuyahoga Falls, left in 1829, among them the old chief whose despairing words are quoted as an epigraph to this chapter.[335] Afterwards, the odd straggler was said to appear at Richfield "now and then and frighten . . . the inhabitants half to death."[336] One wonders what the natives of this region must have made of the sidelong looks and frightened eyes of those who had dispossessed them. Seneca children are said to have attended school in Peninsula near Akron as late as 1890,[337] and if this is the case they must have felt marooned in an alien world. Why they left and where they went does not seem to have been recorded.

Toward the end of his long life, Christian Cackler sorrowed over the dispossession and dispersal of the people he had known as a child and

questioned the sense of it:

> The Indian has gone, with all his forest flocks, to return no more. They have been driven from their homes, their country, and to leave their father's and mother's graves. . . . And for what? Merely to gratify and make room for a covetous and craving disposition that can never be satisfied.[338]

The removal of the last Ohio Indians was widely seen as the lamentable but inevitable exile of "savages" unable to adapt to a superior civilization. Today, we might call it ethnic cleansing. "The red man had gone," Fetzer concludes; "he had yielded to the white man the Paradise of his domains" along the Cuyahoga and the whites "took it eagerly."[339]

# Afterword

IN THE TWO HUNDRED OR SO YEARS since Europeans settled permanently in northeast Ohio a mighty civilization has taken shape. Akron itself is the quintessential American industrial metropolis, known variously over the years as "the Tip-Top City," "the All-American City," "the City of Invention," and "Rubber's Home Town." During the Second World War it vied with Detroit for the title of "the Arsenal of Democracy." It was the birthplace of at least three of the world's first multinational corporations. Many writers, musicians, and inventors have lived here: not the least of them the poet Hart Crane and the inventor Stan Ovshinsky. Anti-slavery martyr John Brown made Summit County his home and Sojourner Truth delivered her famous "Ain't I a Woman" speech in Akron. It was later a bastion of the industrial labor movement. Recent decades have seen it languish in the economic doldrums, but Akronites can gain solace from the fact that their city has been down before and clawed its way back up again.

In 1838, when Akron was young, William Howitt wrote: "The barbarities and desperate outrages of the so-called Christian race, throughout every region of the world, and upon every people they have been able to subdue, are not to be paralleled by those of any other race, however fierce, however untaught, and however reckless of mercy and of shame, in any age of the earth."[340] The expulsion of the Shawnees and Wyandots, who had been joined along the Cuyahoga by Senecas, Cayugas, Delawares, Oneidas, Onondagas, Chippewas, Wyandots, Abenakis, and others, bears this out. Today, there is little sign that Native Americans ever resided in the region, save for the monuments erected on the Portage Path.

The descendants of these tribes were scattered across the further Midwest and north to Canada long ago.

Their expulsion was justified by a self-interested legal fiction. Yale University's Avalon Project has reproduced thirty of the treaties negotiated between the U.S. government and Native Americans between the years 1778 and 1868.[341] The treaty with the Delawares (1778) was signed at Fort Pitt (today's Pittsburgh) by representatives of the United States and the Lenape (Delaware) nation. The treaty recognized the sovereignty and guaranteed the territorial integrity of the Lenape lands. It was "a false suggestion" spread by enemies, the treaty stated, to claim that the design of the U.S. government was "to extirpate the Indians and take possession of their country."[342] Fifty years later, they had been driven west from Pennsylvania and Ohio to Missouri, Kansas, Oklahoma, and Canada.

The suffering and oppression of the Native Americans expelled to what P. P. Cherry called "the glowing West" did not end there. There was no land of milk and honey at the end of their long trek. "Ethnic cleansing"—a term widely used to describe the elimination of unwanted ethnic groups during the Balkan wars of the 1990s—is an apt description of what happened to the American Indian nations. To this day, the United States' Native American populations continue to be subject to persistent racial discrimination and economic and social marginalization.[343]

The testimonies of David Zeisberger and John Heckewelder, who observed the flourishing Delaware nation in northeastern Ohio before white settlement entrenched itself, indicate a legacy of conquest, dispossession, and racism. Far from being the "ferocious savages" of white imagination and propaganda, the native peoples had a strong culture, ingrained ethics, a collectivist approach, and strong social solidarity. Although they succumbed to habitat destruction, disease, alcohol, and the vastly greater numbers, firepower, and technology of the white settlers, they were never passive victims. They fought hard for their land, their culture, and their human dignity.

While we should beware of romantic nostalgia, they have left us with the example of a more humane society based on democratic assemblies, egalitarianism, mutual respect, gender equality, and oneness with nature. This was communism in the true sense of the word, before Stalinism made it a byword for tyranny. The vanished American Indian society does offer

hope for what its admirer Marx called "the definitive resolution of the antagonism between men and nature, and between man and man."[344] The rapacious civilization that destroyed American Indian societies is not, as capitalist ideology insists, the "natural" form of human social organization. It may yet prove to be the destroyer of the whole planet.

Justice demands the redress of the accumulated wrongs heaped upon Native Americans by settler society. Exactly how this justice might be accomplished presents complex problems. We could start with serious reconsideration of the demand by James Anaya, the United Nations special rapporteur on the rights of indigenous peoples, for "the return of stolen land to the Indian tribes." While Anaya welcomed the $1 billion settlement made in 2012 by the U.S. Departments of Justice and the Interior, he said it was only a step in the right direction. The depth of resistance to justice for Native Americans was shown, moreover, by the fact that no members of the U.S. Congress would meet with Anaya to discuss the idea of returning land.

Sadly, despite some encouraging noises from the Obama administration, federal lawmakers are as reluctant to return land as they are to grant reparations for slavery.[345] Predictably, their stance is backed vociferously by right-wing pundits, some of whom believe that the call for the return of land is all a plot by liberals in the country's law schools to defraud God-fearing white Americans from what is rightfully theirs.

Perhaps the people and lawmakers of Akron, Summit County, and the State of Ohio could point the way forward by acknowledging the original ownership of the land along the Cuyahoga by the Native Americans. They could express their abhorrence of the broken treaties and the expulsion of the peoples who once called the Cuyahoga and the Tuscarawas home. More broadly, they could work for constitutional recognition of the Native Americans as the original owners and custodians of the land and call for a just and binding, internationally supervised treaty, or treaties. This might begin with the frank admission that the land was taken by theft, conquest, and guile, that the treaties penned two hundred years ago were in fact "pen-and-ink witchcraft" whose effect—if not intention—was to defraud the Indians of their birthright.

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